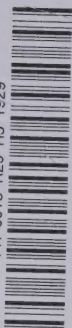





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HIS MAJESTY

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THE EXEMPLARY THEATRE



# HIS MAJESTY

A PLAY, IN FOUR ACTS, BY  
HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER



BOSTON  
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY  
1929

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

HIS MAJESTY

42969

*The people of this play are imaginary and the story is fiction; though it had an origin, sufficiently obvious, in fact. Carpathia is nowhere in particular, nor can its towns be identified on any map.*

KING HENRY XIII. OF CARPATHIA.

QUEEN ROSAMUND.

COLONEL GUASTALLA.

MR. HENRY DWIGHT OSGOOD.

COUNT ZAPOLYA.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK.

DOMINICA CZERNYAK.

ELLA.

COLONEL HADIK.

DR. MADRASSY.

COUNT STEPHEN CZERNYAK.

GENERAL HORVATH.

CAPTAIN PAPP.

MR. BRUCKNER.

CAPTAIN ROGER DOD.

THE MAYOR OF ZIMONY.

A YOUNG OFFICER.

LIEUTENANT VIDA.

SERGEANT-MAJOR BAKAY.

SIR CHARLES CRUWYS.

JAKAB.

# HIS MAJESTY

## ACT I

*We are in the petit-salon of a large house near Zurich. Its architecture is a nineteenth-century echo of the eighteenth, and the furniture is the usual Louis Seize sort of thing. Some business-like looking letter files and a type-writer on its table have crept in, though; and what must be a rolled-up map hangs between the two long windows which give towards the garden and the lake. The big bronze-featured writing-table in front of this is tidily covered with papers and despatch boxes. On either side are double doors.*

MR. HENRY DWIGHT OSGOOD, an American gentleman, aged forty or so, correctly dressed in a recently-pressed suit, stands waiting, hat and gloves in hand. To him there enters COLONEL GUASTALLA, a younger man, in spirit if not in years; ready of speech but discreet, quick, but ever at his ease. He is dressed in a plain uniform which faintly recalls that of the old Austrian Empire.

GUASTALLA. Yes, Mr. Osgood, if you can give us two minutes more his Majesty will be delighted to see you himself. Do sit down. And then you can bear witness too that he is still safe here in Switzerland.

OSGOOD. Does not the published assurance of the President of the Federation suffice? By the way, Colonel . . . if I'm to submit you my copy . . .

GUASTALLA. If he talks freely you'd better. I've been discreet, I hope.

OSGOOD. Excessively.

GUASTALLA. But we pay the right sort of compliment, I've been taught, to you gentlemen of the Press when we flavour all we do want published with an occasional something we don't.

OSGOOD. Why, Colonel . . . the Press-man is human. Some of us you can trust and some you can't. This is the royal sanctum?

GUASTALLA. It should be! We're cramped. I've only the little cubby hole you were kept waiting in. There's the large salon, of course. But her Majesty had a whole wing turned into nurseries.

OSGOOD. Is that so?

*The cadence of MR. OSGOOD'S response is in itself a cradle song.*

GUASTALLA. I worked in the garden-house all the summer. Things are quiet enough as a rule. People of no importance I can see at my hotel. Were you followed, did you notice, coming here?

OSGOOD. I certainly was. Some brand of policeman . . . by the look of his boots. Are you much troubled that way?

GUASTALLA. Not by the Swiss. The concierge will keep them posted. Quite right! If he did n't I should have to see someone did.

OSGOOD. Spies in a man's very home . . . !

GUASTALLA. Agents . . . they prefer to be called. Oh . . . kings in exile look for these little attentions. When two of the Great Powers withdrew their ambassadors a year ago . . . I was vexed . . . I feared our importance was waning. But we found it was only post-war economy. They were sharing the head-housemaid with Paris. Our own people at home are apt to be rather a nuisance. They're anxious . . . and up-start governments always overdo the thing . . . ! His Majesty.

*KING HENRY comes in; a man in his forties. He wears a simple uniform. He is not a very handsome man, nor prob-*



*ably a very clever man; but he is shrewd. His courtesy is innate and he has an ironic, a mischievous sense of humour. He has charm. There are depths in him too; for at times, one may notice, he withdraws into himself, seems to withdraw altogether elsewhere. He gives his hand now to MR. OSGOOD with cordial simplicity.*

*He has been followed into the room by COUNT ZAPOLYA, whose appearance proclaims him to be a distinguished diplomat and statesman of the old school. And this — it sometimes happens so — is what he is.*

THE KING. How do you do, Mr. Osgood? Always glad to see any citizen of your great Republic.

OSGOOD. Your Majesty.

THE KING. . . . that views the affairs of our old world with such disinterested benevolence . . . and has contributed so generously to its restoration. Seventy-three million dollars and more, I think, sent to my poor starving Carpathia. It would have paid half the war indemnity. What a good thing we did n't get it sooner! Do you know Count Zapolya?

*Nothing could be more characteristic of his Majesty than this blend of formality and irony and simplicity. Only very dull men do not find themselves at ease with him.*

OSGOOD. I have had the honour.

THE KING. Are you straight from Karlsburg now?

OSGOOD. I left there day before yesterday, Sir.

THE KING. Bringing the newspapers that tell me I left here for Carpathia a week ago travelling under the name of Fischer. Facts inaccurate . . . but the size of the head-lines most gratifying! You prefer to get your information first hand. Quite right! Zapolya, won't you join her Majesty? Five o'clock. She'll give you tea in the schoolroom with the children . . . English fashion. I shan't have to keep you long.

COUNT ZAPOLYA bows acquiescently to the kind command; then, as he turns to go, asks MR. OSGOOD, very courteously . . .

ZAPOLYA. When did we meet, Sir?

OSGOOD. Paris . . . 1919. And . . . if his Majesty will allow me . . . I have wanted ever since to tell you, Count, that we all thought when they presented you with the treaty you played them off the stage. You had our sympathy.

ZAPOLYA. Thank you. It was a melancholy occasion. But . . . like a true tragedian . . . I ate a good lunch afterwards.

*Bowing once more, he departs. His Majesty seats himself.*

THE KING. Now, Mr. Osgood. Won't you sit down? Sit down, Guastalla. Now?

OSGOOD. With your Majesty's permission I will go in off the deep end. Do you . . . or not . . . expect to be restored to the Carpathian throne in the near future?

THE KING. You have just come from Karlsburg . . . !

OSGOOD. Not direct, Sir. I have been spending a day at Eisenthal.

THE KING. [*To GUASTALLA.*] You did n't tell me that. I think, then, I must interview you, Mr. Osgood.

OSGOOD. Any news I have that is news is at your Majesty's disposal.

THE KING. No . . . I'd rather not hear it.

*The curttness of this brings MR. OSGOOD deferentially to his feet.*

OSGOOD. If your Majesty regrets receiving me . . . why, I have not been received.

THE KING. Never mind! Sit down again. What does it matter? Now listen to me. Do you want to take notes?

OSGOOD. No, Sir.

THE KING. Do you never take notes?

OSGOOD. I am not that incompetent.

THE KING. You'll carry away all I say in your head?

OSGOOD. Yes, Sir.

THE KING. Dear me! I could n't do that.

OSGOOD. You'd learn, Sir . . . if you had to.

THE KING. I hope I should. I doubt it. Well! Carpathia

was broken in the War . . . and I did not shirk the peace that was offered me . . . that you saw Count Zapolya sign. I made no complaint and no excuses to my people. What thanks had I? You connived at my exile. I was the scapegoat. What followed for Carpathia? Red revolution, bankruptcy and famine . . . with Europe's pawnbrokers and stockjobbers to the rescue . . . and a Jew's peace now that the Philistines have done. For I know what Karlsburg's like to-day, Mr. Osgood. Police in the streets again . . . trams running . . . shops open. But rotten with intrigue in politics and finance . . . a moral chaos. Yes, I'd be glad to restore some dignity and decency to my country if I could. But I want no more bloodshed. And this young madcap at Eisenthal . . . ! You saw Stephen Czernyak?

OSGOOD. I had an hour's talk with Count Czernyak.

THE KING. He does n't pretend I've encouraged him?

OSGOOD. He most respectfully complains that you have n't.

THE KING. What sort of men has he got there?

OSGOOD. Youngsters . . . the mass of them . . . that were n't in the war.

THE KING. Quite so. Any guns to count? No . . . don't tell me . . . I'd rather not hear. I'm fond of Stephen Czernyak . . . I've known him from a child. His mother was the first friend her Majesty made in Carpathia. The cutting up of that Eisenthal province was a scandal. The Neustrians are treating their slice of it abominably . . . and this government at Karlsburg has n't treated what's left us much better. But I will not win back my kingdom by bloodshed. I inherited one war. One's enough.

OSGOOD. Then you do not propose, Sir . . . may I say? . . . to drop out of the skies to lead these mountaineers down to Karlsburg . . . to kick Madrassy and his government and the Assembly and the British Mission and the French Mission and the Jews and the lawyers all into the Danube with one kick.

THE KING. You may say that I shall not re-enter Carpathia

like a thief or as a conqueror . . . however attractive the rest of the programme may be.

*This seems to bring the conversation to such a full stop that MR. OSGOOD gets up again; but this time a more satisfied man.*

OSGOOD. Then I will now thank your Majesty for a very challenging talk. With that Colonel Guastalla has told me besides I am confident of making a dignified story of it.

*The KING rises too, and begins a kindly cross-examination. This habit, bred by countless inspections of regiments, factories, schools, model dwellings and the like, has become second nature with him.*

THE KING. Going straight back to Karlsburg?

OSGOOD. No, Sir. Now I know there's nothing doing, I sail on Saturday.

THE KING. Taking a holiday?

OSGOOD. Going home.

THE KING. For good?

OSGOOD. I hope so.

THE KING. I've always wanted to see America.

OSGOOD. Your Majesty may count on a welcome.

THE KING. No Ellis Island? We wretched kings, though . . . prisoners of custom . . . when we're not exiles! You're from New York?

OSGOOD. Not to begin with, Sir.

THE KING. Where from, then?

OSGOOD. Iowa City, Iowa.

THE KING. Iowa City, Iowa! You can have found nothing more romantic in Europe, Mr. Osgood, than I find that. But you've liked my country, I hope.

OSGOOD. A most beautiful country, Sir.

THE KING. D'you speak the language?

OSGOOD. For railroad, hotel and eating-house purposes only.

THE KING. That's been a drawback. You'd have liked my

people too. Farmers and peasants . . . steady and sensible . . . if you only leave them alone. Don't judge by Karlsburg and its mob. Comic operas and stock-exchange scandals are the chief crops there. Interested in farming?

OSGOOD. Mrs. Osgood and I, Sir, operate a small farm in New Jersey. She does, I should say.

THE KING. Jersey? Cows!

OSGOOD. Chickens with us, mostly.

THE KING. But I breed poultry!

OSGOOD. I have that in mind, Sir.

THE KING. What's your fancy, now?

OSGOOD. Mrs. Osgood's for Rhode Island Reds. I've stood by Wyandottes. We consider utility.

THE KING. But prize birds pay. The soil's wrong here. I've not done badly, though. (*He takes from his writing-table a triple photograph frame.*) My Bourbourgs. Mark me now . . . they've a future as a dominant. Louis Quatorze . . . Louis Quinze . . . Louis Seize! A family joke . . . not for publication.

*They really do call to mind the state portraits of these gentlemen, though the birds are the more majestic. MR. OSGOOD conscientiously plays the connoisseur; and THE KING finds this a far more cheerful subject than Carpathian politics.*

OSGOOD. Magnificent lobes!

THE KING. Are n't they? Try cod-liver oil. Do my people want me back, d' you think?

*He replaces the frame. With the question his voice has shifted to a minor key. MR. OSGOOD looks a trifle uncomfortable.*

OSGOOD. Is it for me to say, Sir?

THE KING. Come . . . to a mere exile . . . not yet so used to the truth that I don't sometimes prefer it!

*The frank charm of this would be hard to resist indeed. And, button after button undone, MR. OSGOOD'S studied reserve at last slips off him.*

OSGOOD. Your Majesty . . . what an opening! And how I'd have jumped for it once on a time! Ten years ago my considered opinion upon the whole European problem should have been placed at your disposal. My God, Sir . . . you could n't have found a more rusé young fellow than me . . . shipped eastward, nineteen eighteen.

THE KING. In your army?

OSGOOD. Attached Political Intelligence. I have flat feet . . . which disqualified me from tramping to the trenches with the rest and being shot like a man. Not that I felt quarrelsome! I came full of pity for you all. . . .

THE KING. That is apt to turn to dislike.

OSGOOD. Sir . . . my first sight here was a hospital and my second a battlefield two days old . . . and my first clear thought that there were men here . . . statesmen, so-called . . . who'd had such things in mind all along.

THE KING. They had n't, I assure you.

OSGOOD. Well . . . I could better forgive them than some of their jobbery since. I know lots less than I did. But I've sat in my machine by roadsides and had the common country-folk stand round me with distrustful eyes. If their talk's been strange their meaning's been plain . . . and your Majesty put it pat. For the dear Lord's sake leave us in peace. I don't know now which rile me more . . . the men that fool their fellow-men and call it government or the fellows behind that they let fool them . . . that stir the mud and fish their dirty profit from it. But if for five short minutes I could be God Almighty I'd make a handful of the lot and drop them in the cold Atlantic . . . and we'd hear the joy-bells ring. Me, Sir . . . in my intellectual shirtsleeves . . . with my New York culture shed! What's wrong with an axe and a spade and a bit of land to clear, said my grandad when he went West . . . and I'll pity the government that had tried monkeying with him. And what's wrong with exile from a world like this? That's the question . . . man to man . . . I'd like



to have been asking you. Colonel, I fear you should never have presented me.

*With which apology MR. OSGOOD buttons on his perfect manners again. But THE KING is undisturbed, is much refreshed, indeed, by this Western breeze.*

THE KING. Not at all, Mr. Osgood, not at all! What you say is most interesting. . . .

*At this moment the QUEEN appears; and they all three turn, as people do turn, and even instinctively stand to attention at the sight of her. She is a woman old enough to have a son of sixteen, robust enough to have borne six children besides and to feel the better for it. Whether she is beautiful or not one would never stop to ask: there is a natural magnificence about her that puts aside all such questioning. She is utterly unselfconscious. Her manner is usually gracious, for graciousness has been bred into her as one of the attributes of a queen. When she does not wish to be gracious — how should she ever suppose she is being rude? She is shewing people what she thinks of them; and the sooner they know it the better. She is never — in any sense — slow to move; and she now comes into the room quickly, as if she thought to find her husband alone. She certainly shows no pleasure at finding MR. OSGOOD there; and the temperature of Switzerland seems to fall a degree or two. But the KING, with his charming smile, sets things right again.*

THE KING. My dear . . . this is Mr. Osgood of the United Press and of Oyua City, Oyua, North America. He has been ten years in Europe finding out all about it . . . but he does n't like it and he's going home.

*If there should be any irony in this MR. OSGOOD does not perceive it; he is fully occupied in bowing to the QUEEN, who inclines her head, eyeing him steadily.*

OSGOOD. Your Majesty.

*Once more the KING proffers a cordial hand.*

THE KING. Good-bye then. You did choose a bad time for a first visit. After a war things are always in a bit of a tangle. But think kindly of us. There's a lot in what you say. Even in the old days one wished now and then one was n't a king. But being a king . . . one has to do one's best to be a king, you know.

OSGOOD. Your Majesties.

MR. OSGOOD *has evidently studied the old Carpathian Court etiquette; for he bows once where he stands, three paces back bows again, and yet again at the open door where he finds GUASTALLA waiting for him. The QUEEN, her eyebrows lifting slightly, is not displeased by this.*

GUASTALLA. I'll come down with you.

THE KING. Bon voyage! Oh . . . Guastalla!

MR. OSGOOD *has departed.*

THE KING. D'you know his hotel? We might send him . . . send his wife . . . a couple of cockerels and a pullet or so, if he'd care to take them. From the number five pen, will you say? Friendly fellow!

GUASTALLA *follows MR. OSGOOD. The KING and QUEEN are alone.*

THE QUEEN. Why do you waste time with such people?

THE KING. My dear Rosamund! The Press! Besides . . . one must be extra civil to America.

THE QUEEN. Why?

*His blandness takes on a whimsical tinge.*

THE KING. That is a searching question. We always are. I don't know why. Where's Zapolya?

THE QUEEN. He never takes tea.

THE KING. No . . . but I do. And I thought he'd like to see the children.

THE QUEEN. He's looking old.

THE KING. He's growing old. Time passes.

THE QUEEN. It does indeed! You've not finished your talk with him. Do you want me here?

THE KING. Yes . . . I'd only have to tell you all about it after. We'd not got beyond his asthma when this American man arrived. I always begin with his asthma. He's just come from Eisenthal.

THE QUEEN. The American?

THE KING. Yes.

THE QUEEN. Did you tell him you'd never countenance Stephen Czernyak?

THE KING. What else could I tell him?

THE QUEEN. Henry . . . if you'd listened to me . . . if Cyril and Margaret had n't had chicken-pox and I'd not been nursing them . . . you'd have been in Karlsburg weeks ago. What came of all the bargaining with Madrassy? Nothing . . . and I said nothing would. This talking to journalists . . . it's so undignified! And now Zapolya's to tell us what Paris thinks! Who cares? I wish you'd not sent for him . . . he's a pessimist. And who is Madrassy that he should presume to bargain with you?

THE KING. He's the head of the present Carpathian government, my dear.

THE QUEEN. Nonsense! Carpathia is yours, Henry. Go and take it. Go to Eisenthal. Ride into Karlsburg at the head of your army. . . .

THE KING. Dear Rosamund . . . you're romantic. The problem's not so simple.

THE QUEEN. When you know what you want all problems are simple.

THE KING. Well . . . I want my tea at the moment. And I hope you've not eaten all the muffins between you.

*He has been locking away a paper or two taken from his pocket. He slips his arm in hers and walks her off to the nursery.*

. . . . .  
*. . . The falling of the dusk tells us that an hour or more has past. The talk with COUNT ZAPOLYA has reached*

*that stage when its pendulum is slowing but will not stop, when a half-hearted shove at intervals does not suffice to set it at full swing again; a recognizable moment in all such talks. The QUEEN sits enthroned; COUNT ZAPOLYA is in a small chair, in respectful discomfort; the KING paces the room, at times drifts to the windows, then comes back to his table looking idly for nothing in particular.*

THE KING. No . . . Madrassy won't fight if he can help it. Fighting 's not in his line.

ZAPOLYA. With Czernyak one step nearer Karlsburg he may have to give place, then, to those that will.

THE KING. I don't see this Opposition taking office. There 's nothing they agree upon.

ZAPOLYA. They 'll manage to agree upon taking office if they get the chance. They could govern for a little if the Activists would join.

THE KING. Who 's the best man in that gang?

ZAPOLYA. New men . . . all of them.

THE KING. I get their paper . . . a readable rag! Up and be doing 's their motto . . . no matter much what apparently! Does the wily Madrassy count on my stopping Czernyak, then?

ZAPOLYA. He must think you set him on to start with.

THE KING. Takes me for a fool as well as a liar!

ZAPOLYA. And he spun out his parley with you to make you hold him back.

THE QUEEN. Of course he did!

ZAPOLYA. For Czernyak has a fighting chance, Sir.

*The KING's attention is fixed.*

THE KING. With five thousand men . . . armed anyhow? The Treaty leaves us ten thousand.

*The QUEEN sits up very straight.*

THE QUEEN. Us!

THE KING. Carpathia. Madrassy.

THE QUEEN. Carpathia 's not Madrassy . . . not yet!

THE KING. [*smoothly*] . . . leaves the government in Karlsburg ten thousand troops.

ZAPOLYA. Mostly boys . . . going stale in barracks.

THE KING. The militia besides.

ZAPOLYA. Villagers mainly. Will they march against you?

THE QUEEN. No.

ZAPOLYA. . . . or at all, if they can help it!

THE KING. . . . and ten batteries. Nothing heavy, of course.

ZAPOLYA. He has a fighting chance.

THE KING. I want no bloodshed.

ZAPOLYA. That is another matter, Sir.

*What is it that is really vexing his Majesty?*

THE KING. Why did n't Madrassy move troops up there three months ago?

ZAPOLYA. When he was raising his American loan! New York bankers have all your Majesty's objections to bloodshed.

THE KING. . . . before Stephen had men enough to make any sort of fight for it?

ZAPOLYA. I see Stephen Czernyak with two men and a boy making some sort of fight for it.

THE KING. Why did n't he make a fuss at Geneva about these Neustrian guns?

ZAPOLYA. He did, sir.

THE KING. No, no . . . a real fuss!

ZAPOLYA. The mischief was done. Neustria apologised. The culprit is being tried. Everything's correct. Besides . . . while Madrassy was wondering whether he would n't want you back, your flag hoisted in the mountains was an asset to him . . . with his own Opposition.

THE KING. He was always too subtle, was Madrassy.

THE QUEEN. A time-server!

ZAPOLYA. If a politician can serve his moment of time to any purpose, Ma'am . . . that may not be a reproach. Why did n't your Majesties go back when he gave you the half-chance?

THE QUEEN. He made conditions. He had no right to.

ZAPOLYA. I should have gone.

THE QUEEN. To put ourselves in his power?

ZAPOLYA. He was evidently afraid you would n't be.

THE QUEEN. He never meant us to accept them.

ZAPOLYA. What better reason could you want, Ma'am, for doing so?

THE KING. He was my tutor in classics, you know, when I was a small boy. He has got on . . . since. I made him Minister of Education. I've never quite outgrown the feeling that if I don't please him he'll give me fifty lines of Virgil to learn.

THE QUEEN. He took an oath of allegiance to you, Henry. He has broken it and he'll be damned everlastingly. I hope he remembers that, sometimes.

THE KING. He has enough else to worry him now. The country's in a devil of a mess.

THE QUEEN. And deserves to be!

*His Majesty's mind returns to its vexations.*

THE KING. Why were these Neustrian Banks allowed to find Czernyak money? Why was n't that stopped at once?

ZAPOLYA. Geneva can't touch them, Sir.

THE KING. Their own government could.

ZAPOLYA. Yes . . . but Neustria has a first-class political scandal of her own blowing up . . . and civil war in Carpathia will leave her looking comparatively virtuous.

THE KING. A nice neighbour! But now they've stopped supplies!

ZAPOLYA. Yes.

THE KING. Finally?

ZAPOLYA. I think they want to see if your Majesty will make a move . . . and the effect of it. I think the rumour you'd gone back may have been of their spreading.

THE KING. The effect of that was that Carpathian securities went down with a bump.



THE QUEEN. Madrassy would see they did!

THE KING. But if I'll make a move now this new Paris group will find the money for it.

ZAPOLYA. Yes.

THE KING. Unconditionally?

ZAPOLYA. They've made no conditions.

THE KING. Would you risk your money like that?

ZAPOLYA. I am not an expert, Sir, in this post-war warfare. And like the old crossbowman I can't help chuckling when sometimes the guns do more hurt to the gunners than the enemy. But I grasp its principles . . . so called. You look for trouble . . . or discreetly foster it. Securities go down and you buy. When the trouble's over they go up and you sell. And there's a profit.

THE KING. They may not go up. Then you're ruined.

ZAPOLYA. Not if you've been reckless enough . . . for then your rivals step in to save you. High finance has its altruism. It desires not the bankruptcy of a sinner . . . of a sufficiently spectacular sinner. Bankruptcy is catching. I think the Crédit Pontyon . . . to do it justice . . . wants a settled Carpathia. That is why they want your Majesty back there. Monsieur Ferdinand . . . a-straddle on the hearthrug, his morning cigar in his mouth . . . took a high moral tone with me. Oh . . . the international Jew with his gospel may sell the poor world salvation yet, at a price . . . make us members one of another, . . . since the Christian Church cannot. Mere prejudice, no doubt, to balk at the price . . . as I do.

*The QUEEN rises impatiently.*

THE QUEEN. Nothing's being settled! Things are at a crisis. We must be practical. How does this map let down?

THE KING. Pull the red string. No, my dear . . . that's blue! The red string.

*For her Majesty is not so practical as all that; few of us are. COUNT ZAPOLYA goes to her rescue. . . .*

ZAPOLYA. Allow me, Ma'am.

*. . . and the map is lowered. It shows us Carpathia, all belittled as she now is, powerful neighbours elbowing round her. Karlsburg stands out as a knot of roads and railways in the centre; Eisenthal and its mountains are over to the north, near the Neustrian border. The QUEEN turns business-like.*

THE QUEEN. Where 's Eisenthal? And railhead? It 's not a hundred miles from Karlsburg.

ZAPOLYA. A hundred and twenty, Ma'am.

THE KING. Surely the railway 's cut. Their War Office can't be all that incompetent.

THE QUEEN. It 's a week's marching.

ZAPOLYA. Nine days, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. Go to Eisenthal, Henry . . . and the whole country will rise. Ride into Karlsburg at the head of your army. . . .

*The KING's voice strikes calmly, coldly through her enthusiasm.*

THE KING. London may be for recognising me, you think, if the recall 's constitutional?

ZAPOLYA. Constitutional is music in London's ears. But popular clamour . . . enough of it . . . might do.

THE KING. Paris?

ZAPOLYA. . . . is against you.

THE KING. Then why is the Crédit Ponthyon ready to back me?

ZAPOLYA. Once the Crédit Ponthyon is backing you Paris may change its mind.

THE KING. If I borrow their money first . . . they 'll see I can pay it back!

ZAPOLYA. That puts it crudely, Sir.

*At this moment COLONEL GUASTALLA comes in, and rather hurriedly. He is now in civilian clothes.*

GUASTALLA. You 've not needed me, I hope, Sir. I was called away to my hotel.

*The QUEEN disapproves, first, of GUASTALLA'S bouncing into the room like this; secondly, of his bouncing in without his uniform; thirdly, of his speaking before he is spoken to. It is, therefore, in her iciest tones that she points out even a fourth offence. . . .*

THE QUEEN. And you have now left the door open, Colonel Guastalla.

*He has not only done this, but he crosses to open the other door as he says . . .*

GUASTALLA. Yes, Ma'am . . . I have something private to say . . . if his Majesty will allow me.

*And he looks carefully into the room beyond.*

THE KING. Frederika Bozen 's there, is n't she?

THE QUEEN. Yes.

GUASTALLA. No, Sir.

*They are all now in a thorough draught.*

THE KING. The colds we catch talking secrets in this house!

THE QUEEN. Tiresome woman! I told her to sit there.

THE KING. And the money spent spying on us! Piles of reports . . . can't you see them? If I hatch out a dozen chickens every Foreign Office in Europe rings with it. Well?

GUASTALLA. Captain Dod, Sir, sent to say that if the weather does break flying may n't be too safe for some weeks . . . and the authorities have dropped him a strong hint that the repairs to his engine are taking too long.

THE KING. I thought he 'd been sent about his business.

GUASTALLA. You gave no positive orders, Sir.

*There is something a little disingenuous in the tone; a very sharp eye might detect that GUASTALLA avoids looking at the QUEEN. The KING'S eye is sharp enough; nevertheless his voice is quite casual as he explains to*  
ZAPOLYA. . . .

THE KING. Dod is the Englishman that . . . is he English or American, Guastalla?

GUASTALLA. English, Sir.

THE KING. . . . that was to have flown us . . . home.  
Very well. We can have the doors shut now.

THE QUEEN. And you would like to resume your uniform,  
Colonel Guastalla.

*She sounds slightly mollified. GUASTALLA shuts one set  
of doors; and, departing, the other, with a cheerfully  
deferential . . .*

GUASTALLA. Certainly, Ma'am.

THE KING. Poor Guastalla! In and out twenty times a day  
. . . and has to change each time.

THE QUEEN. To pander to a Swiss Government and its dig-  
nity! They'd make us dress like grocers within doors if they  
could.

*Poor GUASTALLA gone, the KING quietly re-links the broken  
chain of their talk.*

THE KING. But if I make no move . . . and these Neustrian  
banks have stopped supplies . . . what is Czernyak to do?  
He can't live on the country. He'll have to disband.

THE QUEEN. Henry!

THE KING. It's hard on him, I know. If I write him a  
letter . . . will that help? . . . telling him to disband . . .

*Before COUNT ZAPOLYA she really should not! But the  
QUEEN can endure this no longer.*

THE QUEEN. Henry . . . you'll break my heart! You  
bargain with that scoundrel Madrassy for weeks . . . though  
it's plain as daylight that he's tricking you. You talk to  
journalists and given them chickens. But when ten thousand  
men want to lay down their lives for you . . . all you'll do is  
to tell them not to.

THE KING. Six thousand at most.

THE QUEEN. What's the difference?

THE KING. If it comes to fighting there's some difference.  
Can you see that a letter gets to him?

ZAPOLYA. I'll try, Sir.

THE KING. I've no right to countenance such folly.

ZAPOLYA. But, sooner than disband, he may choose to fight . . . while he still can.

THE KING. D' you think he will?

ZAPOLYA. Don't you?

*The KING — as he can when needs must — looks facts in the face.*

THE KING. Yes, I do. Do these Neustrian gentlemen think so too?

ZAPOLYA. They 're tired of waiting. I fancy their game is to force him to.

THE KING. Knowing he can't win?

ZAPOLYA. What do they care for that, Sir? They want three months anarchy in Carpathia . . . and they 'll get it. Whatever happens they won't lose.

*At which conclusion his Majesty looks pretty grim; and for all comment . . .*

THE KING. I hope there 's a Hell.

*He walks up to the map and stands studying it. The QUEEN, a little wide-eyed at this new prospect, turns to COUNT ZAPOLYA in almost childish appeal. . . .*

THE QUEEN. Can't he win?

ZAPOLYA. Not by all the rules, Ma'am. Miracles happen.

THE QUEEN. I think he might.

*The KING is intent on the map still.*

THE KING. Eisenthal! Ever there?

ZAPOLYA. I was born twenty miles away . . . across the present frontier, Sir.

THE KING. Of course! Stupid of me!

THE QUEEN. Why do you use that map, Henry?

*The symbolic sight of poor despoiled Carpathia is more than she can bear.*

THE KING. It 's the latest. I keep it rolled up.

THE QUEEN. Did they know, Count Zapolya, when they handed you that infamous treaty, that they were asking you to sign away the very house you were born in?

ZAPOLYA. So long ago, Ma'am, that no doubt they thought I'd forgotten.

*The KING has begun to pace the room.*

THE KING. How could Stephen let himself be tricked like this?

ZAPOLYA. Has he been tricked, Sir? He always meant to fight. He has had their money. They leave him in the lurch. He's free of them . . . and so would you be.

THE KING. He can't think he'll win.

THE QUEEN. I think he'll win.

THE KING. If he did . . . I can't go back on such terms. I've said I won't.

ZAPOLYA. How could you refuse to . . . if he really won?

THE KING. I'll have no bloodshed.

THE QUEEN. Dear Henry . . . don't keep saying what you won't have. What will you?

*Lashed by her vehemence, HENRY comes to a standstill, facing the facts again.*

THE KING. The plain truth is, I suppose, that I don't much want to go back . . . upon any terms. With things as they are! Would you? Would you take office again?

*He appeals to ZAPOLYA, who responds smilingly, sadly; for indeed he is both looking old and growing old.*

ZAPOLYA. I, Sir? Oh, yes! The old horse dies happier in the shafts.

THE QUEEN. I trust we shall see you in office again, Count Zapolya.

*But this is for the KING's benefit and encouragement rather than his, and he knows it.*

ZAPOLYA. Thank you, Ma'am . . . but I could not advise his Majesty to recall me. True . . . I am one of the few Elder Statesmen that did not make the War. But worse . . . I made the Peace. This new democracy has no faith in God . . . but it still needs a Devil to believe in . . . to cast the burden of its follies and sins upon. Leave me in exile to play that harmless part. Find some respectable demagogue . . . when the



time comes . . . to make a fresh start with . . . who 'll give the mob its stomachful of flattery and sensation. Fed fat, the beast will be less trouble to you.

*Her Majesty dislikes irony.*

THE QUEEN. You are not serious, I think, Count Zapolya.

*The KING is pacing the room again, half attentive, half wrapt in his thoughts.*

THE KING. Back to that puppet show! Poultry farming's a man's job beside it! But I used to have some quite good ideas about being a king.

ZAPOLYA. Government is a strange art, Sir. An expert calling at which the expert fails . . . and the wise man when he is too wise!

THE KING. You 'll stay and dine?

ZAPOLYA. Your Majesty is most kind.

THE KING. I shall write to Stephen to disband.

ZAPOLYA. Yes . . . I should, Sir.

THE KING. But you think he 'll disobey me.

THE QUEEN. I hope he 'll disobey you.

THE KING. I know you do, Rosamund . . . but you really must n't say so.

ZAPOLYA. I venture to hope he 'll disobey you, Sir. But write the letter. Five thousand men facing such odds for you . . . shows you are still to be counted with. The letter will free you from blame for the folly of it. And if by chance he should win . . . success never needs much explaining away.

*The KING gives him a sidelong look.*

THE KING. There's even the chance that he might obey me. Not that anyone ever has yet!

ZAPOLYA. The letter will take some days to reach him.

THE KING. True! Dinner's at half-past eight.

*His reputation for sublety thus sustained, COUNT ZAPOLYA, bowing, departs. The QUEEN bends her head in punctilious acknowledgment, but then gives an exasperated little sigh.*

THE QUEEN. Why can't he bow properly? Even he!

THE KING. He did bow.

THE QUEEN. Once! Who told that American what to do?

THE KING. They know all these things.

THE QUEEN. Our own people think they can treat us as they please now. Guastalla bounces into this room . . . as if it were any room. While we're living like this, be more strict about such things . . . not less! And you leave all the scolding to me.

THE KING. I do wish, by the way, you would n't seduce Guastalla from his duty.

THE QUEEN. Henry . . . what a thing to say.

THE KING. He knew perfectly well that I meant Dod and his machine to be sent about their business. But you're his goddess . . . you've only to lift your finger! You and he think, I suppose, that you've only to say Go Back or Go to Eisenthal often enough for it to end in my going!

THE QUEEN. Not at all.

THE KING. Well . . . that is how most people are persuaded to do things. Czernyak has been a fool. No man is safe from his supporters . . . that's the first lesson every leader has to learn.

THE QUEEN. Don't be paradoxical.

*The KING, having coasted the room again, looked out of the window, glanced again at the map, now comes to a standstill, flings himself into a chair and lets his thoughts drift away.*

THE KING. If you could begin again, Rosamund, would you choose to be a Queen?

THE QUEEN. Yes, of course.

THE KING. [*With his whimsical smile.*] Even mine?

THE QUEEN. But I am a Queen.

THE KING. This place is cramped, I know. And it's very Swiss . . . naturally! But it's not uncomfortable. You'd never come to think of it as home?

THE QUEEN. How can you ask?

THE KING. What made my grandfather build that great stucco barrack of a palace? Dreary and draughty! Put less than twenty at table and the private dining-room 's a desert. And one winter when I was a boy . . . and the city electricians had struck and it was foggy . . . I lay in bed there by candle-light and I could not see the ceiling! That 's a fact. You 've never stayed at the Castle. Charming! But its drains are wrong.

THE QUEEN. Your grandfather thought of what was due to the greatness of his country.

THE KING. He did! And look at it! But he was a nice old man when you knew him. Do you carry in your mind, I wonder, any constant picture of me? What is it?

THE QUEEN. Whenever I 'm angry with you . . . then I try to think of you standing that day before the altar . . . crowned, with your sword stretched out, taking your oath to save Carpathia in her need.

THE KING. Or die.

THE QUEEN. Or die. And riding back with the crowd cheering you!

THE KING. It did n't.

THE QUEEN. Henry . . . I heard it!

THE KING. It yelled at me. I might have been a circus. But they weren't very cheerful yells. The war was going badly. Was there much to choose between that noise and the shouting in the square the night they bombed Grandpapa's statue . . . the night we ran away.

THE QUEEN. And I wish we 'd died rather!

THE KING. It seemed the sensible thing to do . . . to give the Democrats their chance.

THE QUEEN. Much they made of it!

THE KING. But it may have been my chance . . . to be a king and not a puppet for five minutes . . . and to die. It so seldom occurs to the well-meaning man that sometimes the best service he can do the world may be to get out of it.

THE QUEEN. Cyril would have revenged us when he grew up.

THE KING. The silly sort of thing he 'd have found expected of him! [*She is sitting by him now, and he puts a friendly hand on hers.*] But as we did very sensibly make a bolt of it, I wish it amused you more now to think of us togged up as chauffeur and lady's maid . . . though anything less like one than you looked! The man at the barrier was a fool not to spot you.

THE QUEEN. [*Miserably.*] I believe he did. Why else did he grin?

THE KING. I never thought of it! Yes . . . they were all glad to be rid of us.

THE QUEEN. I try not to let little things humiliate me.

THE KING. I drove the two hundred and thirty-five miles in nine hours and forty minutes . . . and we stopped once for petrol. There's nothing humiliating in that.

*In sudden surrender to Fate she breaks out . . .*

THE QUEEN. Henry . . . why don't you abdicate? Send to Madrassy and tell him you'll abdicate. I'll never say another word about it to vex you. You can run the farm and enjoy yourself. And we're still fit to bring up the children, I suppose.

THE KING. No . . . while they're all supposed to be squabbling about me I can't abdicate. No . . . if that flying man can be ready I shall go back to-morrow.

*The QUEEN'S spirits leap from misery to hope; to ecstasy almost.*

THE QUEEN. To Eisenthal?

THE KING. No, Rosamund! My dear . . . I've said No to that so many times. Please don't suggest it again.

THE QUEEN. But you can't go to Karlsburg . . . as things are.

THE KING. Not very well.

THE QUEEN. Where will you go, then?

THE KING. I'm considering.

*He rings the little telephone on his table.*

THE QUEEN. But why?

THE KING. Zapolya's an old fox! I won't have civil war started. Stephen must come to heel. And I must have a good talk with Madrassy.

THE QUEEN. He'll have you murdered . . . if he gets the chance.

THE KING. I don't think so.

THE QUEEN. Of course he'll have you murdered.

THE KING. No . . . it would n't do.

THE QUEEN. He could hang the man that did it.

THE KING. Rosamund . . . don't be so tortuous.

THE QUEEN. He's a traitor! He's a Republican! He's a trickster and a Socialist! Why should n't he have you murdered?

THE KING. . . . or so passionate! You set me defending people I disapprove of . . . and it warps my judgment.

*The QUEEN accepts the situation — whatever it puzzlingly is.*

THE QUEEN. Very well! I think you ought to fight . . . and I think it's wicked to stop men fighting in a good cause. But we'll go.

*The KING's eyebrows lift.*

THE KING. You can't go.

THE QUEEN. I shall certainly go.

THE KING. I'll take Guastalla. It'll be a risky journey . . . whatever happens when I get there.

THE QUEEN. Do you expect me to sit here and wait? I'm your wife, Henry . . . even if I might be a better one.

THE KING. My dear . . . if we both came to grief the children would be left pretty helpless.

THE QUEEN. I'm sorry . . . I'm not that sort of a mother.

THE KING. Well, perhaps they're not that sort of children . . . as they're yours.

*They are now standing affectionately together. Her eyes, he sees, are filling with tears.*

THE QUEEN. You think if I come I'll upset everything. I

know I'm unpleasant to people. I was n't always. It's this life here. I know I worry you! I try not to! You're so patient! I wish you were n't. You think me a fool!

THE KING. Far from it. I think you talk nonsense now and then. But we all do that. And you're often right by instinct when my judgment's wrong. I only wish you did n't want me to be something I'm not.

*The QUEEN dries her eyes and breaks out in humorous desperation.*

THE QUEEN. You're so good, Henry!

THE KING. [*Whimsically.*] That's against me, I admit.

THE QUEEN. And I want you to be great . . . and I mean you to be. But I never forget, I hope, that I'm only your wife and the mother of your children.

THE KING. You're a bit of a child yourself, you know.

THE QUEEN. So are you!

*And GUASTALLA comes in, answering the bell, to find them laughing happily at each other. He has put on his uniform, and his manner is now, surely, all that could be desired.*

GUASTALLA. Your Majesty rang?

*The KING is dismayedly apologetic as he says . . .*

THE KING. Oh . . . have you changed! You'll have to run down to your hotel again to get in touch with Dod. I'm so sorry. And I must send a couple of messages through our friend in Karlsburg. We'll do that first. Bring your cipher. We shall want some money. That means a letter to Paris.

GUASTALLA. They're opened now, Sir, whichever way I send them.

THE KING. It won't matter much.

*No bustle so pleasant as that which ends in decision, wisely or no. GUASTALLA vanishes. The KING is at his table, business-like. The QUEEN surveys him with such puzzled affection.*

THE QUEEN. Oh . . . I wish I understood you! You're

not a coward . . . and you won't fight. You argue like a lawyer . . . and let anyone get the better of you. You ask every one's advice and agree with all they say . . . and now you do this foolhardy thing.

THE KING. It's the right thing to do. You can come if you like.

*She might be a child promised a treat; sedate, though, in her pleasure.*

THE QUEEN. Thank you, Henry. I must go and kiss Teresa good-night.

THE KING. Don't tuck her up for five minutes. I'll be there when I've sent these telegrams.

*He has a note-book and pencil in hand; and he turns now to consult the map again. She comes up and gives him a shy little kiss on the cheek before she leaves him.*



## ACT II

*A salon in an eighteenth-century Carpathian Chateau, built under French influence, of course. It is a beautiful room; but it is now incongruously furnished with a kitchen table, five or six old wooden chairs and a grand piano, and there are no curtains to the long windows that give upon the terrace. One can tell that pictures have been taken from the walls; and the glass chandelier has been badly smashed. The place has in fact been looted; only the grand piano was too cumbersome to be carried off. At right angles to the windows, a double-door opens into one of the other salons; at right angles to this a small doorway in the panelling leads along the corridor.*

*It is late afternoon.*

*At the kitchen table, where they have evidently been having some sort of a rough meal, sit COUNTESS CZERNYAK and her daughter DOMINICA. COUNTESS CZERNYAK is fifty or over; and, by her face, one may tell her for a woman, who has come, through whatever storms, into an autumn calm that is very beautiful, who is content now to be a sensitive, tolerant, humorous observer of the world. DOMINICA is young and has spirit, the livelier for its being under control. Both she and her mother are dressed for a journey.*

DOMINICA. . . . so if you don't want that grey silk, Mamma, I could dye the stuff and it would do for a dinner dress.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. There might be other things in those old trunks.

ELLA, COUNTESS CZERNYAK'S maid, comes in; a buxom young woman in her twenties. She also is dressed for a journey. This can hardly account, though, for her present excitement, which good manners hardly suppress.

DOMINICA. Well, next time we come . . . ! Ready to start, Ella?

ELLA. If you please, my lady, there are three strange people in the garden. Yes, just ready! And the Colonel has got his gun . . . so I thought I'd better warn you. I hope the coffee was n't very nasty. He says he gives them while he counts ten to say who they are and then he shoots. It's the only way now he is alone here, he says.

DOMINICA. What are they like?

ELLA. One's dressed as a woman. Oh . . . !

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. God be good to us . . . it's the Queen.

*It is indeed the QUEEN, who, weary and dusty as from tramping the roads, has appeared at one of the windows.*

THE QUEEN. Oh, my dear Ja-ja . . . at last!

*JA-JA, we find, is COUNTESS CZERNYAK (it is a nursery name the children gave her; she was their "official governess" in the old Court days); and the QUEEN is ready to fall on her neck in relief.*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. We'd given you up, Ma'am. We've been here since the day before yesterday.

THE QUEEN. The King and Guastalla have gone round the back way . . .

*With a gasp, and as if moved by the same spring, DOMINICA and the buxom ELLA vanish down the corridor.*

THE QUEEN. What's the matter?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Nothing, I hope.

*But for her fatigue, the QUEEN'S nerves might be still more on edge. COUNTESS CZERNYAK is calm, but her lips are pressed tight — and tighter as, in the near distance, a shot is heard.*

THE QUEEN. What's that? What has happened?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. We'd better wait here now . . . till we know.

*But the QUEEN realises what it might mean.*

THE QUEEN. Oh, Ja-ja . . . that could n't happen! Yes . . . it could!

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Here 's somebody.

*We hear steps down the echoing corridor and, to the COUNTESS'S unspeakable relief, the KING comes in. The QUEEN shuts her eyes, crosses herself, and, to our knowledge, says nothing. The KING'S uniform is as dusty and travelled-stained, even more; but he is in high spirits. He has been followed into the room by DOMINICA, who now grasps a kitchen poker.*

THE KING. It's all right. No one's hurt. How are you, Countess? He had me covered. Guastalla let fly at him from the back of the dust-bin . . . missed him by an inch! And were you coming for us with the poker?

DOMINICA. I broke the window, Sir. I saw he could n't hear me. . . .!

THE QUEEN. Who was it? Who did it?

THE KING. I don't know. He apologised. Nice old man! There's no harm done. Took us for brigands! Well, we look it.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. I'm so sorry, Sir.

*And, as far as his Majesty is concerned, that ends that.*

THE KING. Sit down, my dear . . . you're dead tired. But here we are . . . safe and sound . . . at last!

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. We'd given up hope of you . . . we were just leaving.

THE QUEEN. How long since we left?

THE KING. It's twenty past five now by Swiss time. We got up from the aerodrome at a quarter to six yesterday morning. Thirty six . . . thirty-five hours and a half. Not so bad . . . considering!

THE QUEEN. We had to come down in a fog . . . and sleep by a haystack . . . and wait all this morning while Guastalla and the Englishman went trying to find oil. And now we've walked ten miles.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. You've had no dinner! There's nothing in the house, Ma'am, but scraps. But the car can go to the village.

THE QUEEN. Give me some coffee.

THE KING. I'm not hungry. We've been eating sausage and cheese and raw onion all day. Most sustaining!

COLONEL GUASTALLA *now arrives, laden with three rucksacks; the contents of two of them he empties on the table.*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK *is managing to wash out a coffee cup for the QUEEN. She and GUASTALLA greet each other with friendly formality.*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Sugar, Ma'am?

THE QUEEN. Please.

GUASTALLA. Countess!

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Colonel!

THE KING. Well, Countess . . . where's Madrassy?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. He was here by midday yesterday. He has been gone two hours.

THE KING. Can't be helped! He came, anyhow . . . and came quick. And where's your belligerent son?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Was Stephen to come here too, Sir?

THE KING. If he got my message.

DOMINICA *hands the QUEEN her coffee.*

THE QUEEN. Thank you, Dominica. You're looking very pretty. When did I last see you?

DOMINICA. Two years ago, your Majesty.

THE QUEEN. Long years, my dear!

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Did Dr. Madrassy know?

THE KING. Yes.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. He said nothing. There's been no word from Stephen. I've had not a word from him since he went to Eisenthal four months ago.

THE QUEEN. How's that, Ja-ja?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Letters would be stopped, Ma'am,

in any case. There's a price on his head. It's placarded all over Karlsburg. They pasted one up in front of my window.

THE QUEEN. Time we were back, indeed!

THE KING. He could get here safely enough. Madrassy came alone?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. With a secretary . . . and another car full of detectives.

THE QUEEN. [*Scornfully.*] Detectives!

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Nobody seems to know hereabouts . . . or to care much . . . who's governing the country.

THE KING. It all looked so peaceful from the air. I know now just what it feels like to be Providence . . . and preside calmly over everyone's troubles. A pity we had that breakdown . . . but we could not keep our bearings.

THE QUEEN. Captain Dod did wonders, I'm sure . . . but I do think he found it all much too amusing.

THE KING. I've enjoyed the jaunt thoroughly so far. And you were splendid. Now the dull part begins. What's this, Guastalla?

*He is at the table surveying the packages.*

GUASTALLA. The Paris code, Sir. I couldn't manage much but money and papers. But I could drive back for the bigger things now. Dod must stand by his machine.

*For the first time the QUEEN becomes aware of the strangeness of her surroundings.*

THE QUEEN. What has happened to this room, Ja-ja?

THE KING. Are you on the telephone?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK *manages to answer both questioners at a time.*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. It has n't been put back, Sir. Well, we saved the big Velasquez, Ma'am . . . it's rolled up and hidden in the laundry . . . and some of the Sevres. But of course there was a lot of looting. They took the telephone wire and the posts to make fences.

GUASTALLA. There 'll be one in the village, Sir. It's probably working.

DOMINICA. The detectives were using it yesterday. Mamma . . . why not take the Velasquez back with us?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. My dear . . . what should we do with it?

DOMINICA. Sell it to the Jews. We could now.

DOMINICA *should not, first, talk to her mother, except very indirectly, in the QUEEN'S presence; secondly, she should not be so flippant. The discipline that follows, though kindly, is cold.*

THE QUEEN. Dominica.

DOMINICA. Yes, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. Put my cup down. You 've grown a little wild.

*The KING is now bending over a map.*

THE KING. If he only left two hours ago he can't be back in Karlsburg yet.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. He was to stop and dine at Gratz, I think, with the Cardinal Archbishop.

*This is altogether too much for her Majesty.*

THE QUEEN. With the Archbishop!

THE KING. Good! He can wait for me there. No! His car will be faster than yours, Countess.

THE COUNTESS. Much.

THE KING. He'd better come back here to me, then . . . detectives and all! Be off Guastalla! If you miss him at Gratz . . . well, we 'll see.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Let Dominica drive you down, Colonel. The car knows her!

GUASTALLA. Thank you.

DOMINICA, *curtseying to the QUEEN, departs.* GUASTALLA *follows her.*

THE KING. Her Majesty will sleep here, in any case, Countess.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. It 'll be a harder bed than the haystack, I fear, Ma'am.

THE KING. A troublesome houseparty for you. Sorry! I did n't know you 'd be so put to it to entertain us.

*Her Majesty's indignation now boils over.*

THE QUEEN. Madrassy! You made him a Minister and he betrayed you. He betrayed his fellow-traitors. He has been leagued with murderers . . . and he left them to their fate. And he 's dining with the Archbishop!

*The KING is busy over his map; and philosophical.*

THE KING. Yes . . . the world 's like that. I must get hold of Stephen somehow . . . and quickly. I must have a light on this map.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. We 've a big table in there, Sir.

THE KING. Any note-paper?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. They were writing all day yesterday. . . .

THE KING. Don't trouble.

*He carries his map into the other room. With a certain formality — which does not in the least traverse her gentle affection for the QUEEN — COUNTESS CZERNYAK asks . . .*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. What can I do for your Majesty?

THE QUEEN. Nothing, dear Ja-ja. But it 's like old times to hear you ask that. Sit down. Shut the door first . . . we must n't disturb the King. Now tell me all your news. Letters and newspapers only tantalise one. The children are nearly well again. I thought for three days Sophia would catch chicken-pox too. So hard to isolate them in that wretched villa. A sensible little doctor . . . did everything I told him. But, oh, what a country! Crevices between rocks! What a climate . . . and what people! I got bronchitis in June. But I 'm quite strong now.

*If COUNTESS CZERNYAK smiles at this sequel to 'Tell me all your news' it is inwardly.*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. I 've heard every now and then from Frederika Bozen. . . .



THE QUEEN. A good creature. Clever with her needle. A little selfish! Do you think I ought to have let Margaret cut her hair?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. She sent begging me to beg you to let her.

THE QUEEN. They all think Ja-ja has still only to say the word! She 'd set her heart on it. But it looks so . . . up-to-date.

*Dusk is falling; and in the dimmer light the room looks yet more stark and bare. The KING returns.*

THE KING. Better not leave this money lying about!

THE QUEEN. How much did you bring?

THE KING. A million marks . . . a hundred thousand francs worth. And a hundred thousand francs . . . which may be two million marks more by to-morrow morning.

THE QUEEN. I don't understand that.

THE KING. If the mark slumped six weeks ago at the rumour that Madrassy was parleying with me . . . what will it do when it hears I 'm back? May I have that candle?

*It stands on the piano, stuck in a wine-bottle. COUNTESS CZERNYAK lights it for him.*

THE QUEEN. It ought to go up!

THE KING. Yes . . . that 's what a loyal mark would do! You 've not seen this morning's paper?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. No, Sir.

THE KING. Our leaving must have leaked out by now. Thank you.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Forgive the candlestick.

THE KING. They 'll censor the news here, I suppose.

*He goes out, his hand protecting the faint candleflame.*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK *sits by the QUEEN again.*

THE QUEEN. I 'm sorry you had to receive Madrassy here. But the King thought it best.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. I had some interesting talks with him, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. Really! You could n't have found much to agree upon.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. That made them the more interesting.

*The QUEEN gives her a sidelong glance — and changes the subject.*

THE QUEEN. You must be very proud of Stephen.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Yes. When he was a naughty boy . . . and very naughty . . . one was proud of him somehow, still.

*The QUEEN is not too pleased with her friend's tone. She puts a plump question.*

THE QUEEN. And you're glad to see us back?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. It's like old times, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. Then why don't you seem glad? Ja-ja . . . things must have changed if you've changed!

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. No, Ma'am . . . I'm too old to change. You can count on me.

THE QUEEN. I'd no idea your home had been so wrecked. Why did you never tell me? The Russians are savages . . . and always were . . . though one can't say that now.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. They were only here a day. Our troops began it.

THE QUEEN. Are you sure? Who says so?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. They were retreating . . . they'd been beaten. And when you're beaten . . . if you've any strength left . . . it's a relief to smash something. I daresay they thought that if they did n't do it the Russians would.

THE QUEEN. I begged the King to punish all that propaganda in the army.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. I came back as soon as I heard . . . and by then our own people from the farms were looting. When they knew I was packing what was left here they came in a crowd. And I stood in this room, Ma'am, and saw it wrecked round me by men and women I'd known, some of them, as children . . . and I'd tried, I did think, to be kind to them.

One or two wanted to stop it . . . and one of them snatched back a little silver Madonna they'd taken . . . I suppose he thought I valued it. They killed him . . . there by that window. His own brother helped to kill him. [*There is a moment's empty silence.*] I walked through the village yesterday . . . I'd not been here since. They smiled at me . . . they were kindly. I believe they've forgotten. Better so.

*The QUEEN is really fond of her.*

THE QUEEN. Poor Ja-ja. We'll build it all up again.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. No, Ma'am . . . I mean to leave it like this while I live. I shan't be coming back often . . . Dom-inica's so busy in Karlsburg . . . and we've a comfortable, ugly, little flat there. But I find myself here among the wreckage. For my life's like this, Ma'am.

*The QUEEN almost shakes a finger.*

THE QUEEN. That's morbid.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. One must n't complain. We lucky ones have been borrowing prosperity for these few hundred years. But the older the debt the less one likes paying.

THE QUEEN. And that's Dr. Madrassy talking, I think.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Oh, no, Ma'am! . . . it's not at all the sort of thing I say to him. We were arguing about French poetry most of the time. He'll have none of these new young Catholics . . . but I think there's a lot in them.

*The QUEEN hardly hears this; she too is finding something of herself in the wrecked room.*

THE QUEEN. I dreamt last night . . . I woke with such a jump and the moon was shining on me . . . about that last Birthday ball . . . d'you remember it? . . . before the War. I think of it so often . . . the men in their uniforms and all those pretty girls kissing my hand. Oh . . . surely that was n't just show! It meant something, did n't it? What has happened to them that they've done nothing to set the world right again? Not a thing . . . till Stephen shames them! What has happened to them all, Ja-ja?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Some are living on what they've got left . . . and some are in Paris. Some are earning their living.

THE QUEEN. Well . . . as things are . . . we must n't blame them for that.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Here and there they have n't done badly. Andrew Palfy's a partner in the Bibiena Bank. He says he blackmailed the Levinskys into making him one . . . though what worse he could tell about them than everyone knows, I can't imagine. He gives his friends work. My sister Kate does typing there.

THE QUEEN. [*Kindly.*] She was always so practical.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Little Countess Sarkotic runs a tea-shop. You remember, Ma'am . . . she used to fancy herself in a cap and apron handing cups round at bazaars. Oh, sometimes it has made no real difference. Hilda Lenygon's professionally disreputable now . . . all but! . . . and I begin to respect her.

*Her Majesty is not amused.*

THE QUEEN. And you still cut your jokes . . . which I always appreciate. Will you have my rooms made ready now, please. I may be able to lie down for an hour.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Very good, Ma'am.

*It does indeed seem like old times.* COUNTESS CZERNYAK rises, curtsies and goes. Left alone, the QUEEN lights a cigarette. The KING comes from the inner room. He has a written sheet of notepaper in his hand and is waving it about to dry it.

THE KING. You did n't bring your fountain pen?

THE QUEEN. No.

THE KING. This ink's atrocious. Cigarette to spare? I've smoked all mine. And there's no blotting paper.

*She gives him — and he achieves the lighting of — a cigarette, the letter still in his hand.*

THE QUEEN. Time we were back indeed! I wish we were

going on to Gratz. I'd like to tell the Cardinal Archbishop what I think of him.

THE KING. Cardinals, alas, care less than most people what one thinks of them . . . unless, of course, one's the Pope!

THE QUEEN. This money you've brought . . . it's not the kind without your head on it, I hope.

THE KING. My dear . . . there's no other kind now.

THE QUEEN. Your money is the real money, surely.

THE KING. There's a Karlsburg restaurant has its walls papered with hundred mark notes with my head on them.

THE QUEEN. You've told me that before. I don't think it amusing.

THE KING. Do you want to hear my letter to Stephen?

THE QUEEN. Now that you're back every other sort of bank note should be burned.

THE KING. The banks would be much obliged to us.

THE QUEEN. Why?

THE KING. Aha! You should have read that little book on Currency I sent up to you when you were ill. A bank note is a note of the bank's debt to its holder. Therefore if you burn it . . .

*No; after thirty-six hours of aeroplane, haystack and cross-country tramp, she really cannot!*

THE QUEEN. Never mind! I'm sure there's trickery somewhere.

THE KING. Well . . . there often is!

*He has waved the letter dry, and now starts to read it. . . .*

My dear Stephen . . .

THE QUEEN. Don't you write a letter of this sort in the third person?

*But he too is weary enough to be shorter of patience than usual.*

THE KING. No, I don't! I've known him from a baby . . . and after three sentences my grammar goes all to pieces. Do let us be sensible.

THE QUEEN. Henry . . . here we are . . . dropped out of the air . . . helpless . . . ridiculous! Look at you . . . and I've not had my hair done since yesterday. But you're God's anointed and I'll die with you if need be. We should think of that, and not try to be . . . sensible.

*He puts a gentle hand on her rumpled hair.*

THE KING. Dear heart . . . you're worn out.

THE QUEEN. I'm not . . . I'm not! I'll sit with my eyes shut for ten minutes. At least we've a roof to cover us.

*On his way back the KING notices, among the others on the table, a little packet tied up with pink ribbon.*

THE KING. What on earth's this?

THE QUEEN. Two Grand Crosses of St. Anne and five Second Class St. Andrews. They were in the cupboard in your bedroom. I thought they might be useful.

*This most happily restores him his sense of humour.*

THE KING. I daresay they will be.

*He goes to finish his letter. It is almost dark now, and the flickering candlelight casts, through the half-open doors, queer shadows about the bare room. The QUEEN sits motionless; her eyes closed. After a moment COLONEL HADIK appears at the little door. He is old, and more than old; the life of the body has lost its meaning for him. He is dressed in rough country clothes. But, whatever his birth and breeding, he is an aristocrat, and would look it, whatever he wore. Silently though he comes, the QUEEN senses his presence and opens her eyes.*

THE QUEEN. What is it?

HADIK. I beg your Majesty's pardon . . . I thought Countess Czernyak was here.

THE QUEEN. No.

*He bows and is going, when . . .*

THE QUEEN. Are you the caretaker?

HADIK. Yes, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. Was it you that fired at his Majesty?

HADIK. No . . . I recognised him in time, Ma'am.

*The QUEEN has now become fully aware of him.*

THE QUEEN. Were you always a caretaker?

HADIK. No, Ma'am. My name is Hadik. I was Colonel and chief instructor in Ballistics at the Military Academy. The Peace Treaty closed it.

THE QUEEN. I know. Are you related to Countess Czernyak?

HADIK. Her cousin, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. What are Ballistics?

HADIK. The mathematics of gunnery, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. But have you no pension?

HADIK. There are . . . so I'm told . . . to be old-age pensions for all when the Budget is balanced. But I am not counting on that. May I look for Countess Czernyak now, Ma'am?

THE QUEEN. She is giving orders about my rooms. Who else is here in the house?

HADIK. No one, Ma'am . . . except, for the moment, her maid. They will be moving your Majesty's bed into the State Apartments . . . and I had better help. It is only my camp-bed, I fear. But it is not uncomfortable.

THE QUEEN. Thank you, Colonel. I disapprove of your being in this menial position. I shall tell Countess Czernyak so. And those responsible for your neglect will be punished.

HADIK. I am content, Ma'am. I want no one punished.

THE QUEEN. But how can you manage? What do you do?

HADIK. I study mathematics still. In the higher mathematics lies knowledge that has hardly yet been cursed by man's use of it. I can still work in the garden. I need only bread besides . . . and a little wine. I'll kill a man in self-defence if I must. I do not justify that. But such is the nakedness of our nature . . . of which I am no longer ashamed. May I go now and help move that bed, Ma'am?

*As she does not answer — for indeed she is at a loss for*



*further comment and she is not accustomed to reiterating her wishes — he bows and goes. After a moment the QUEEN calls . . .*

THE QUEEN. Henry!

*. . . and the KING appears in the doorway.*

THE KING. Yes, my dear.

THE QUEEN. The man that shot at you is Ja-ja's cousin and a Colonel of Ballistics at the Military Academy . . . and he's the caretaker here . . . and he's quite mad. What has come to this country?

THE KING. But he did n't. Guastalla shot at him.

THE QUEEN. Dear Henry . . . don't be so literal!

*The QUEEN leans back again and closes her eyes; the KING disappears. . . .*

*. . . . .*

*. . . The room is now sufficiently lit by a new and very brassy oil lamp, bought in the village evidently. In the QUEEN'S chair — the only fairly comfortable one — sits COUNTESS CZERNYAK asleep, and settled to sleep, if we may judge by the rug she spread over her knees that has now slipped down. There is light in the other room too, as we see when COLONEL GUASTALLA, coming out, quietly opens the half-door. And from it — between this opening and a closing as quiet — comes the sound of voices, high in argument. Two we know; the third is a strange one. It is DR. MADRASSY'S. So he is back from Gratz and his dinner with the Cardinal Archbishop, and some hours must have passed.*

THE KING'S VOICE. But my good Madrassy . . . here we are . . . two men with wills of our own. . . .

MADRASSY'S VOICE. Helpless, Sir, I assure you!

THE KING'S VOICE. Nonsense!

THE QUEEN'S VOICE. And very wicked nonsense!

*GUASTALLA is crossing the room to the little door in the panelling; but he sees that the rug has fallen to the floor,*

*and he comes back to pick it up. As he puts it over the Countess' knees she opens her eyes.*

GUASTALLA. It grows chilly about now.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. What is the time?

GUASTALLA. Twenty-five past four.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Will they never have done?

GUASTALLA. Nothing harder, is there, than to agree to disagree!

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. We might all have been in our beds . . . if we had any . . . hours ago.

GUASTALLA. Who's for the top of the piano?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. You can toss for it with Dr. Madrassy.

GUASTALLA *gives* — *one cannot think why* — *a grim little smile.*

GUASTALLA. He shall have it if he'll stay.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Why do you keep fidgeting in and out like this?

GUASTALLA. Come now . . . I did n't wake you the last time. We want an evening paper. The enemy's chauffeur may have one.

*Once more the half-door opens and again MADRASSY'S voice is heard, more emphatically this time; the interview is evidently coming to a full close. GUASTALLA slips quietly away.*

MADRASSY'S VOICE. Very well, Sir . . . we've said all the sensible things we can say. We'll part . . . and do the least foolish possible.

*With which rather calculated farewell, he takes leave of their Majesties and joins COUNTESS CZERNYAK. DR. MADRASSY is a man of sixty, the scholar turned politician. His exact fastidious mind makes the brutalities of politics seem more brutal by its clear recognition of them, and offers itself as a sacrifice to their brutality. Not a happy man, therefore! Only a sense of the need for going on sustains him; only*

*the salt of a bitter humour lets him palate life for the time at all. He closes the door and stands looking at COUNTESS CZERNYAK as in mute appeal for understanding, though not sympathy. All her response is . . .*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. What made you suppose they'd go back without more ado . . . looking ridiculous . . . feeling ridiculous?

MADRASSY. I did n't! But I had to give them the chance to. I have n't spared them. I always liked him. Broken loyalties lie heavy on a man.

*From the inner room come the KING and QUEEN. The dispute is taken up as if it had never been interrupted.*

THE KING. You won't force me to fight you, Madrassy, and don't think it.

MADRASSY. It won't be my policy to begin, Sir.

THE KING. I am not a puppet in Czernyak's hands . . . and you've no right to doubt my word.

MADRASSY. You can sensibly do one of two things, Sir. Be off back again. Or head this rabble from Eisenthal . . . blaze your way to Karlsburg . . . and try me as a traitor when you get there . . . if you catch me.

THE QUEEN. You are a traitor, Dr. Madrassy . . . and if his Majesty had you taken out and shot here and now you'd have no right to complain.

THE KING. Nonsense! If we're to come to that Madrassy could better have me shot. He has a dozen men here.

MADRASSY. I shan't, Sir. I've my reputation as a moderate man to keep up. But after this most compromising talk to you I'll be getting back to Karlsburg, if you please, to reconstruct my Cabinet . . . while I still can.

THE QUEEN. By bringing men into it, who've boasted they'd have us killed like vermin if we dared set foot in our own country again!

MADRASSY. Yes! The only way left me, Ma'am . . . now you've done so . . . to stop them doing it.

COLONEL GUASTALLA *has returned, a newspaper in his hand.*

GUASTALLA. A three o'clock edition, Sir. Racing tips mainly. But the mark has started sliding.

MADRASSY. And now I'll be told that I held back the news while I speculated. Czernyak's advance leaking out has done it, I suppose.

*The KING wheels round.*

THE KING. Has he advanced? When?

MADRASSY. Early this morning. He'll be in Zimony by to-morrow.

*There are times when his Majesty can lose his temper; and, for a moment, this looks like being one of them.*

THE KING. We've been talking for two hours . . . and you never tell me that.

MADRASSY *smiles his wryest smile.*

MADRASSY. I thought you knew, Sir . . . and did n't know, perhaps, that I did.

THE KING. Then he has never had my message. I sent him strict orders not to move a man.

MADRASSY. He got it. A little late . . . but in time to obey you. We tapped it . . . but I had it sent on.

THE KING. Zimony! How far from here, Guastalla?

GUASTALLA. Sixty miles.

THE KING. And where's Czernyak himself at the moment? Perhaps you can tell me that.

MADRASSY. On his way here with a dozen cars and fifty men to try and capture me. And if I wait much longer he will.

THE KING. He will not. I am responsible for your safety.

MADRASSY. Thank you, Sir . . . I won't risk it.

THE KING. D'you think I knew such a trick was being played on you?

MADRASSY. No need you should. But Colonel Guastalla was in and out a good deal while we were talking, I noticed.

THE KING. Did you know of this, Guastalla?

GUASTALLA *owns up — and with confident rectitude.*

GUASTALLA. Count Czernyak passed Pfalz with eight motor cars an hour ago, Sir.

*His Majesty is speechless; MADRASSY is very cool.*

MADRASSY. Pfalz? The road's trenched and wired ten miles on.

GUASTALLA. Yes . . . I'm waiting to hear if he's through.

*He faces DR. MADRASSY squarely. Hostilities are evidently commencing, while the KING looks on. But now they are all conscious that COLONEL HADIK is on the threshold, pausing there, as if he had not expected such a roomful.*

HADIK. I beg your Majesty's pardon.

THE KING. No . . . come in.

*He says this amicably enough; how has poor COLONEL HADIK offended? — who now does his errand, speaking more to COUNTESS CZERNYAK than to anyone, yet, somehow, not exclusively to her.*

HADIK. Dominica would like to know whether she shall bring in some hot malted milk and biscuits. The kitchen stove is lit.

MADRASSY. Which means perhaps that he is!

THE KING. Does it, Guastalla?

GUASTALLA. Yes, Sir.

THE KING. How perfectly childish!

MADRASSY. But I congratulate your Majesty upon so efficient an Intelligence Service! How have you worked it, Colonel? Are my fellows asleep? They ought to have warned me.

GUASTALLA. They're at the telephone in the village. Czernyak's headquarters has wireless. We've been picking up Morse with our aeroplane set. The air's buzzing with news. It does n't need much de-coding.

MADRASSY. He's two hours away still.

GUASTALLA. About that.

THE KING. Then have some malted milk before you go . . . as the stove is lit.

COLONEL HADIK *gravely departs; and after this flash of sarcasm the KING himself turns grave.*

You have done your duty, Guastalla, no doubt . . . but in future let me know what you 're doing, please. I came back to stop this sort of folly . . . not to profit by it. When I 've stopped it I 'll be off again . . . I give you my word . . . if there 's no more use I can be. Run your Republic . . . who cares? . . . if you 've turned republican . . . why not? But if I were the fool or the trickster you seem to take me for, I 'd surrender my sword to the first soldier you could send against me with honour enough to . . . ! By the bye, Guastalla, I must have a sword. Why was mine left behind?

*He speaks of it as John Citizen speaks of his umbrella.*

GUASTALLA. In the hurry, Sir. I 'm sorry.

THE KING. Well . . . find me one somehow. Rosamund, do sit down . . . then we all can. I 'm dead tired.

*The QUEEN does not know whether she is standing or sitting; her body is weary, but her spirit is afire. She sits down, however; and the rest dispose themselves, GUASTALLA near the KING, COUNTESS CZERNYAK discreetly apart.*

THE QUEEN. Dr. Madrassy . . . was there ever a moment when you meant to give us back our own?

THE KING. Better have been frank with me!

MADRASSY. Old habit clings, Sir. We never were very frank with you. If Czernyak had n't played the fool . . . or if you 'd been content to let him. . . ! If you 'd been patient till these new people with money to spend had begun crying out for a King and a Court again . . . ! They 're a vulgar lot, though . . . you would n't have liked them. But remember . . . it 's little more than a year yet since the red flag was flying over Karlsburg.

THE QUEEN. And you were saluting it.

MADRASSY. As it happens, Ma'am, I never did . . . I never

had to. While the Red Terror raged I was down with rheumatic fever . . . and through the White Terror that followed I had shingles.

THE QUEEN. How lucky for you!

MADRASSY. Yes . . . I used to lie awake at night with the shingles and think so.

THE QUEEN. Were you in the Revolutionary Government or not?

MADRASSY. To this day, Ma'am, I don't know. I was Minister of Education . . . and nobody bothered about such amenities . . . or about me. They were shooting and hanging people and in far too much terror themselves to think of anything else.

THE QUEEN. You could have resigned . . . on principle.

MADRASSY. No. On principle . . . it's the only one I've clung to . . . I never resign. Perhaps I was dismissed. Perhaps someone re-appointed me when the tumult was over. I had a bed in my office and telephones by the bed. And if anyone came to talk politics my secretary said that whatever I'd got was undoubtedly catching. My staff stuck to me . . . a sound lot . . . and the work went on somehow. And through Red Terror and White Terror not a school in the country was closed.

*The KING smiles gravely.*

THE KING. You're proud of that?

MADRASSY. Yes. I'm proud of that. I don't suppose the children were taught much. But we fed them a little and kept them off the streets . . . street sights were n't pretty just then. When I did get out of bed I found my dear countrymen weary of Red Terrors and White Terrors too. Reconstruction was the cry . . . which meant that we all sat round trying to guess what would happen next.

*DOMINICA CZERNYAK has now brought in the malted milk in cups on a tray and is handing one to the QUEEN. COLONEL HADIK follows with a tin of biscuits.*



THE QUEEN. Thank you, my dear. Are n't you very sleepy?

DOMINICA. Oh no, Ma'am . . . it's all much too exciting.

MADRASSY. And I guessed right.

*The KING gets his cupful.*

DOMINICA. The one with the spoon is your Majesty's. It has sugar in.

THE KING. Thank you.

MADRASSY. So I found myself my country's saviour. And really . . . considering . . . I've not done so badly.

THE QUEEN. You're an opportunist, Dr. Madrassy.

MADRASSY. That is the word, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. You were a defeatist in the War, I think.

MADRASSY. History had taught me the use men make of victory.

THE QUEEN. Are we much better off for being beaten?

MADRASSY. We've saved our souls alive. Little else, I know. But when your conquerors overreach themselves . . . as conquerors will . . . urge them to the extreme of their folly. You get your revenge . . . if that's what you want . . . the sooner. No biscuits, thank you.

HADIK. Your car is waiting.

MADRASSY. Thank you. High time too! My fellows will be furious you've been too clever for them. Furious with me! They wanted to come half a regiment strong . . . with machine guns and searchlights and heaven knows what else.

*He is gulping down his malted milk as he stands ready to go. The KING rises too.*

THE KING. So you must put me in the wrong.

MADRASSY. If I can, Sir.

THE KING. You're not jealous of my coming back to make peace? I apologise for asking.

MADRASSY. A little jealous. I'm human.

THE KING. Nor afraid for your job?

MADRASSY. I've a wife and children to keep.

THE KING. Is there nothing reasonable we can agree to do?

MADRASSY. Much, Sir. But by to-morrow you'll have borrowed a sword . . . and if I've a good word for you I'll be out of office the day after.

THE KING. Who are these gentlemen that want to hang me that you want for colleagues?

MADRASSY. Brigau, Bruckner . . . and probably Medrano.

THE KING. Activists all?

MADRASSY. I must hook them if I can. I must keep them quiet somehow.

THE KING. Is this the Bruckner that shot the President of the Assembly?

MADRASSY. No . . . that was Bruckner the Christian Democrat. He has given up politics.

THE KING. He was acquitted.

MADRASSY. Yes . . . but he can't get on with his party. Too thorough-going! This one's a silent fellow. May I wish your Majesties good-night?

THE KING. If you make me fight you I give you leave to hang me.

MADRASSY. My work'll be cut out to stop my hotheads making me attack you, Sir. I shall isolate you at Zimony and cut off supplies. With six thousand men to feed you'll be looting the town in a day or so.

THE KING. I shall pay for every loaf.

MADRASSY. A starving town won't sell food. So you'll have to surrender . . . or attack. I'm told, though, those Neustrian guns are no good. They need calibrating.

THE KING. They'll not fire a shot . . . unless you fire the first.

MADRASSY. I'm the slippery politician, Sir. . . . I don't fight. I hope you won't. But it may be your task to fight . . . if not to fight and win to fight and fail. To fight . . . knowing you'll fail . . . hating to fight and with no faith in fighting.

THE KING. Pretty damnable doctrine!

MADRASSY. Is it? We must not be egoists . . . even in

virtue. And if a few months' more ignorant war are needed in this war-rotted country to prove that such well-meaning people as you and I, Sir, are none of us any use here . . . the price must be paid. What has our credit with our fellows or ourselves or with history to do with it? Good-night, Countess.

*A little quiet mischief is in* COUNTESS CZERNYAK'S *response, mischievous friendliness almost.*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. I hope Stephen won't catch you.

MADRASSY. I hope . . . after your kindness . . . that I shan't catch him. May I have back . . . if you've done with it . . . that little pamphlet on Rickets which you thought might keep you awake? I must thank the author for sending it to me.

*She finds it for him.*

THE KING. Rickets?

MADRASSY. Rachitis, Sir . . . a very common child's disease . . . due to under-feeding. It came as I was leaving . . . I read it on the journey . . . with a letter from its eminent author thanking me for the chance I gave him to examine our Karlsburg school children while the Peace Treaty was in the making . . . when they were dying like flies. Well . . . we know all about Rickets now . . . so he tells me. I only hope it's true. That much reality made sure of! We do wring a little knowledge from the God above our warring gods. A bitter fruit . . . but sound. Good-night, Sir.

*DR. MADRASSY departs, GUASTALLA accompanying him but almost immediately returning. The QUEEN rises, relieved of the burden of such a presence.*

THE QUEEN. A perverse mind! You've given him his chance. He's a beaten man . . . and knows it!

*The KING is at his map again; it still lies on the table.*

THE KING. Plucky of him to come back though, and risk being caught! Pfalz . . . sixty miles. Stephen should be here by seven. Zimony . . . fifty . . . fifty-five. Guastalla . . . take notes, please.

THE QUEEN. Colonel Hadik . . . what is calibrating?

HADIK. The adjustment of the bore of a gun, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. Is it hard to do?

HADIK. Given the machinery . . . no, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. We must make the machinery.

THE KING. We shall want more money. Can we keep in touch with Paris? Yes . . . we've our backs to the frontier.

GUASTALLA. Paris will keep in touch with us, Sir . . . as long as they want to provide it.

*The QUEEN has seated herself at the piano, and she begins to strike resoundingly magnificent chords, which after a little resolve themselves into the last dance of Borodine's Prince Igor ballet. The KING, concentrating his tired mind, is moved — even he! — to protest.*

THE KING. Oh, my dear Rosamund . . . at this time of night!

THE QUEEN. I feel alive again.

THE KING. Is Zimony friendly, I wonder. We must have a proclamation out before Czernyak's troops arrive.

GUASTALLA. I could start now . . . if you'll draft it . . . and knock up a printer early.

THE KING. You must have some sleep.

GUASTALLA. I shall manage. You'll send Dod there with his aeroplane? He's keen as mustard.

THE KING. He knows there'll be no fighting?

GUASTALLA. He can drop propaganda . . . and there'll be reconnaissance . . . and he'll look dangerous up aloft. It'll all help.

THE KING. Very well. Now then! To my people . . .

*The QUEEN has relapsed to the slow movement.*

THE QUEEN. D'you remember this, Henry . . . at the Opera in Zurich . . . on my birthday? And I cried . . . we felt so lonely . . . with that crowd of Swiss staring at us.

THE KING. I remember. To my people . . .

THE QUEEN. Dominica . . . this piano's out of tune.

DOMINICA. Yes . . . it must be, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. Very bad for it. Have it seen to.

DOMINICA. Yes, Ma'am.

GUASTALLA *has brought the lamp to the table to concentrate its light on the map and his notes. We hear her Majesty at the piano plainly enough. The rest of the assemblage are discreetly in the shade.*

THE KING. To my people . . .

THE QUEEN. And did you know, Henry, that your state charger is in the farm stables here?

*This really does interest the KING.*

THE KING. Snowjacket!

THE QUEEN. Ja-ja bought him from the dealer they sold him to. Colonel Hadik gives him exercise.

THE KING. How does he go, Colonel? He was always doped when I got on him.

THE QUEEN. Henry!

THE KING. My dear . . . if you 'd ever been drifted sideways down the street . . . saluting and saluting . . . with brass bands blaring at you! Thank you, Ja-ja . . . it was like you.

HADIK. He needs corn, Sir.

GUASTALLA *is intent on the map now, and the soldier in him speaks.*

GUASTALLA. Suppose Madrassy does attack us, Colonel?

HADIK. Occupy the station and the bridge.

THE KING. Surely they could shell us out of that.

HADIK. They 've no big guns, Sir. Their seventy-five's a pretty thing . . . six batteries of them! And it carries my range-finder . . . which your Majesty was once good enough to praise. I have the letter you wrote me.

THE KING. Did I? Have you? That's right! You must come along too . . . and give us good advice.

THE QUEEN. And will you please see, Colonel Guastalla, that Snowjacket goes to Brantomy?

GUASTALLA. I'll do my best, Ma'am.

THE KING. My dear Rosamund!

THE QUEEN. Do trust my judgment . . . in some things.

*The KING makes another try at the proclamation. The QUEEN plays on.*

THE KING. To my people. Relying only upon the justice of my cause . . .

*His inspiration flags.*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Won't you go to bed, Ma'am? It's nearly five.

THE QUEEN. In a minute. I'm not tired.

*Having said so, however, she discovers that she is — and indeed has some right to be — simply extenuate with fatigue. It is creeping on them all. And now the KING looks up to find COLONEL HADIK at his side, trembling a little, anxious to speak.*

HADIK. Would your Majesty perhaps give me some less responsible appointment? I was proud of my guns once . . . but I am not very wise now. I could still fight . . . but you never know who guns kill . . . and I think now it may not be right to . . .

*The old man trembles more and more. COUNTESS CZERNYAK comes to give him a reassuring touch on the arm.*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Basil. . . .

HADIK. If I might wait upon your Majesties . . . as a servant. . . .

THE KING. You shall do whatever you like best to do, my dear Colonel.

*The kind voice steadies him. The QUEEN has stopped playing now.*

THE QUEEN. How still!

THE KING. Well, these will be the main points. Peace at home and abroad . . . due observance of Treaties with hope of readjustment. . . .

GUASTALLA. I have your draft of a year ago, Sir, if that'll help.

THE QUEEN. Your poor beautiful home, Ja-ja! But we'll build it up.

THE KING. I'd like to say something different if I could. Adherence to League of Nations . . . good government under Constitution . . . union of all classes and parties. . . .

*He goes on trying to find something different to say, while the QUEEN strikes a few last, desolate, single notes, before she betakes herself to the camp bed in the State apartments upstairs.*



## ACT III

*The KING did establish his headquarters at Zimony railway station. Though all the engines were got away when orders came from Karlsburg to cut the line, one or two coaches were left; and these, drawn up to the platform, serve their Majesties to live in. Cramped accommodation certainly; but by putting up two rough wooden hoardings between the coaches and the platform wall, a spacious, though rather draughty, ante-room is made. One of the waiting-rooms has contributed a large table and some chairs; so it serves its purpose well enough.*

*Sitting round the table, at the moment, we find the KING, COLONEL GUASTALLA and DR. MADRASSY. Besides these there are GENERAL HORVATH and his aide-de-camp; COUNT STEPHEN CZERNYAK and MR. BRUCKNER. The table is ranged with papers and pens and ink; a conference is evidently in progress, over which the KING is presiding.*

*GENERAL HORVATH is an old soldier, upon whose more military virtues good living and an easy good nature have told, by the look of him, pretty severely. A gentleman withal. His aide-de-camp is remarkable for nothing but the extreme correctness of his uniform. STEPHEN CZERNYAK is a man in the early thirties; handsome, not merely nor necessarily in feature, but in virtue of a certain nobility of spirit that informs him; there is something of the panther about him, his strength seems a coiled-up spring; he is a born leader of men, though where he will lead them is another matter. MR. BRUCKNER, who (with DR. MADRASSY) is the only man not in uniform, might be passed over by a casual observer, and might for a while defeat the curious, so closely can he wrap himself in dull taciturnity. He can sit at such a meeting as this immobile and*

apparently indifferent, till his presence is forgotten. He prefers to have a paper or a book to rest his eyes upon, for when he looks at you there is a brooding strength in them that you do not forget. He is plebeian, but not vulgar; the temptations of the flesh pass him by. We are at a pause in the proceedings. GUASTALLA is busy writing and the others sit silent. But there is an unrelaxed tension to be felt, a sign that all is not over. After a moment the KING speaks, a touch of suppressed impatience in his tone.

THE KING. Finished, Guastalla?

GUASTALLA. Just about, Sir! “. . . and except for the matters here set down either party . . . ” Receives?

MADRASSY. Reserves. I write a shocking hand, I fear.

GUASTALLA. [*as he copies on.*] “. . . reserves full liberty of action.” Finished, Sir. Shall I read it over?

THE KING. Yes.

GUASTALLA. “Protocol of armistice concluded at Zimony railway station November 11, 1923. Present: His Majesty King Henry, Count . . . ”

CZERNYAK. His Majesty the King of Carpathia.

GUASTALLA *pauses*. *No one takes up the challenge. After a moment the KING, catching GUASTALLA'S eye, says quietly . . .*

THE KING. Go on.

GUASTALLA. “. . . Count Stephen Czernyak, commanding His Majesty's forces; Guastalla, aide. On behalf of the Government established at Karlsburg, General Horvath, Dr. Madrassy, Mr. Bruckner . . . ” [*to the aide-de-camp*] I fear I have n't your name.

*The aide-de-camp confides it to him voicelessly.*

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP. Papp.

GUASTALLA. [*Noting his badges.*] Captain.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP. Yes.

THE KING. I think we can take it as read. I'll sign. Guastalla and Captain . . .

GUASTALLA. Papp.

THE KING. . . . can certify copies while you and the General mark your maps, Czernyak, and make your dispositions. Here?

*The document is before him.*

GUASTALLA. Yes, Sir.

THE KING. Give me a pen that will write.

DR. MADRASSY *hands his own fountain pen to GUASTALLA, who gives it to the KING, who signs.*

THE KING. Now, General.

*The document passes in turn to GENERAL HORVATH, to STEPHEN CZERNYAK, DR. MADRASSY, MR. BRUCKNER; and they sign it. Meanwhile the KING has himself handed the pen back with a courteous . . .*

Thank you, Dr. Madrassy.

*And the signing over, he rises abruptly with a . . .*

Good afternoon, gentlemen.

*As he passes towards the railway carriage they also rise, respectfully and silently; MR. BRUCKNER is a bit behind-hand in this tribute. As the KING mounts the steps, however, GENERAL HORVATH breaks forth in a voice that has echoed over many a barrack yard, mellowed now by time and five courses of dinner.*

HORVATH. Your Majesty!

THE KING. Yes?

HORVATH. Will your Majesty now permit me to express the most profound regret that circumstances should have brought me into apparent conflict with your Majesty? I have endeavoured to combine duty to my country with all possible respect to your Majesty personally. And I pray that from this moment the spectres of discord and anarchy . . .

THE KING. I make no complaint, General . . . nor need you feel self-conscious. I hope your wife is quite well, by the way.

HORVATH. I thank your Majesty . . . she is pretty well.

THE KING. My compliments to her, please.

*He goes into the carriage. His tone has been — and for the first time since we knew him — slightly acid. But*

GENERAL HORVATH *was too deeply moved by his own oratory to notice that. He turns to find STEPHEN CZERNYAK looking at him with the politest contempt. But he does not notice this either.*

CZERNYAK. Will you come to my office, General? Our maps agree, I expect. I can show you the doubtful place from the top of the signal-box if your glasses are good enough. I've broken mine.

HORVATH. At your service! What I said to his Majesty surprised you, Count Czernyak . . . vexed you, Madrassy.

MADRASSY. Not at all!

HORVATH. It came from my heart. This is an honourable armistice for all concerned. [*To CZERNYAK again.*] You'd have liked a little fighting first. I understand that. You're young. But what is the object of war? The making of peace. You tell me we've been Europe's laughing-stock, sitting facing each other these three weeks . . . and not a shot fired. No, Czernyak! Between fellow-countrymen . . . a bloodless campaign, brought to a creditable conclusion . . . rightly thought of, what can be more glorious? Where is your office?

CZERNYAK. Fourth door down the platform. The Ladies' Waiting Room!

*Briskly and impressively the GENERAL departs. His intellectual diet, one fears, has also been rather debilitating. He must have fed full upon stories of iron-handed soldiers with the hearts of children, upon praise of the soldier as the true enemy of war and the like. The ghastly fiasco of the Great War being over, he now prefers to see himself in this light; a very fine light too! GUASTALLA finds that CAPTAIN PAPP is waiting with perfect politeness, in the most correct of attitudes. He responds with . . .*

GUASTALLA. I'll follow you, Captain Papp.

*So CAPTAIN PAPP follows his chief. He out of hearing, CZERNYAK allows himself the slight relief of . . .*

CZERNYAK. I thought you and your colleague had come to do the necessary twaddling, Dr. Madrassy.

*And he follows. GUASTALLA meanwhile, has opened the door in the opposite hoarding: he now calls through . . .*

GUASTALLA. Dod!

DOD'S VOICE. Hullo!

GUASTALLA. Conference over! [*Then, returning, to MADRASSY*] Captain Papp is a fair specimen, is he, of your new army officer?

MADRASSY. Very.

GUASTALLA. What relation . . . forgive me! . . . to the General's tailor?

MADRASSY. A good guess. He's his son.

GUASTALLA. Old Horvath never did pay his bills!

*CAPTAIN ROGER DOD appears: an Englishman in his thirties. Good health, good temper, un-selfconsciousness and tolerance, and a cheerful ability to turn his hand to anything and to do it well enough — and to enjoy doing it — are his passport all over the world.*

This is Mr. Roger Dod . . . who flew us from Zurich . . . commands our air force . . . edits our official gazette . . . distributes our propaganda. Dr. Madrassy is anxious to meet you.

*DR. MADRASSY'S manner is cool in the extreme; but if he thinks DOD cares a rap for that he is much mistaken.*

MADRASSY. We are flattered, Mr. Dod . . . just to say to you personally what I said to the British Minister about you some days ago . . . by the interest you take in our country's affairs.

DOD. Don't mention it, Sir. I'm enjoying myself.

MADRASSY. I don't doubt that. You've been dropping on us nothing deadlier than pamphlets and newspapers so far.

DOD. They've done a bit of damage, I hope.

MADRASSY. Are you author-in-chief as well?

DOD. Bless you, no! I only run the team. All the bright

young spirits we could comb out who 've a turn for literature. Quite a few! And it keeps them out of mischief.

*A young officer comes in and salutes.*

GUASTALLA. What is it?

THE YOUNG OFFICER. Lieutenant Vida, Sir . . . asking for Count Czernyak.

GUASTALLA. In his office.

THE YOUNG OFFICER. And would his Majesty see Mr. Nagy?

GUASTALLA. The Mayor?

THE YOUNG OFFICER. Yes, Sir. He has been waiting about since twelve o'clock. And the old farmer wants to know if his Majesty means to take his evening walk round the farm.

GUASTALLA. He can wait.

THE YOUNG OFFICER. He won't wait, Sir. It's milking time.

GUASTALLA. Ask Colonel Hadik then. He's inside.

*The YOUNG OFFICER passes on into the railway carriage.*

GUASTALLA *turns to go.*

MADRASSY. I must telephone the text, please, to Karlsburg as soon as it's verified.

GUASTALLA. I've nowhere less draughty to ask you to wait, I fear.

MADRASSY. You can't be very comfortably installed.

GUASTALLA. There were houses in the town for the asking. But her Majesty won't leave headquarters.

MADRASSY. A train without an engine. Symbolic! Is the famous Snowjacket still in his horse-box?

GUASTALLA. He was kicking it to bits. Too much corn. He's out at grass.

MADRASSY. Symbolic indeed!

*The YOUNG OFFICER comes from the railway carriage and speaks to GUASTALLA.*

THE YOUNG OFFICER. Will you please see the Mayor, Sir.

GUASTALLA. Curse the Mayor! I'm busy.

*So whether he will or won't is not quite clear. He departs,*



*however, and the YOUNG OFFICER follows him. DOD takes up the thread of his own discourse, as if it has not been interrupted.*

DOD. No . . . politics are n't my pigeon. I don't really know what all this row 's about. Nor is journalism.

MADRASSY. You have a gift for it. You have added appreciably to the confusion of the public mind.

*Why waste these delicacies of sarcasm?*

DOD. But your king 's a good fellow . . . and I 'm for him. And the country 's for him, my belief is . . . if you 'd give it the chance to say so. We 've fought clean at least. Could n't you have censored that caricature of the two of them . . . riding bareback into Karlsburg.

MADRASSY. It was vulgar.

DOD. It was vile. If at any time you care to introduce me to the fellow that did it I 'll have pleasure in horsewhipping him.

MADRASSY. The world looks like that to him . . . and I find the groups of people round the kiosks grinning at his grossness begin to look like that to me. Your view of life is a prettier one, I 'm sure. But is it any truer?

DOD. I don't see what that has to do with it. Good afternoon.

*With which most British remark DOD leaves them. Not one sign of interest has MR. BRUCKNER shown so far in the proceedings; and there is a shade of irony in MADRASSY'S tone as he turns to him now — for, really, such silence seems almost a pose.*

MADRASSY. Well, Bruckner?

*BRUCKNER looks up to ask in his turn with matter of fact readiness.*

BRUCKNER. Back to Karlsburg to-night?

MADRASSY. Or finish the business while we 're at it?

BRUCKNER. You and his Majesty seem to get along famously.

MADRASSY. What do you make of him?



BRUCKNER. We'd better have forced him to fight.

MADRASSY. Suppose he has beaten us?

BRUCKNER. How sorry would you be?

MADRASSY. When I do go over to the enemy . . . I shall hope to take you with me.

BRUCKNER. That's a bargain.

*This little duel of edged humour is brought to an end by the KING's return, cap on head, stick in hand, on his way for a walk evidently. DR. MADRASSY rises to ask . . .*

MADRASSY. What time will it suit you, Sir, to renew our discussion?

*The KING turns, most amiably.*

THE KING. Now, if you like. I was only going for my walk. I want some tobacco . . . and I've a few serious words to say to my bootmaker. Why don't you come too . . . both of you? Or would it compromise you to be seen with me? What have we to discuss?

MADRASSY. The week's none too long to turn round in. There are various questions. We shall demobilise when your Majesty has disbanded . . . not before. You'll need transport.

THE KING. Come . . . you can find us transport. Back to railhead, at any rate! The men must be got home comfortably.

MADRASSY. Then there are your personal plans.

THE KING. True.

MADRASSY. What are they?

*THE KING is frankness and simplicity incarnate; and surely, they think, there must be something behind this. Is there?*

THE KING. Well . . . I gave you my word I'd be off again once this trouble was ended . . . if I found I was n't wanted. Thanks for your help . . . and yours, Mr. Bruckner . . . in ending it so harmlessly.

MADRASSY. You're content to be off?

THE KING. No . . . I'm not. I've had a happy time

here . . . playing at soldiers . . . and at being a king again. And I don't want to boast . . . but we 've been quite popular. You're not . . . so I gather . . . in Karlsburg, for the moment. Money market hectic . . . trade upset . . . strikes to be settled! And you're to blame . . . because you're there to be blamed. A soulless city! But here it has been all quite simple and human . . . and I've felt at home. For, indeed, I am! However . . . if you're sure I'm not wanted . . . I gave you my word.

BRUCKNER. Who wants you, Sir . . . and what for? That's the question. Can you answer it? We'd have to . . . if we were n't to get rid of you once and for all now while we can.

*His MAJESTY seems to become simpler and franker still.*

THE KING. I suppose we've all lain awake a night or two at some time hoping the morning might bring us an answer to that. Well . . . the power and the glory are yours nowadays, Mr. Bruckner . . . and I hope you'll enjoy them! I get on with my fellow-man. I'm afraid that's my only gift. But I really like the creature . . . Homo sapiens, you know . . . even when he is n't . . . and he usually is n't . . . I like him!

*From his place at the head of the table he picks up the blotting pad; and on it . . .*

Here we have him complete . . . head, body, two arms, two legs! Sitting in Council and listening by the hour . . . I used to find myself drawing him again and again . . . like this . . . and wondering what he'd say to it all. For you gentlemen that govern him . . . and there are so many of you nowadays . . . despise him, don't you? He knows that. You flatter him . . . because you're afraid of him . . . and you come at last to hate him. He knows! He can't do without you for the moment. But it's a sort of comfort to him . . . tussling with life . . . to feel that there's one fellow-creature, at least, free enough from the tussle to want nothing from him

. . . not even his vote . . . who 'll wish him well now and then with a word or two, if that 's all there 's the chance to do . . . and no questions asked. A most unpretentious job! But . . . strip it of its flummery . . . it might be a real job still. However . . . I gave you my word.

*Being answered, MR. BRUCKNER makes no further remark.*

*But he keeps his eyes on the KING for a little.*

MADRASSY. Switzerland won't receive you again, Sir.

THE KING. That complicates matters.

MADRASSY. And we've our conditions to make now for letting you go.

*The KING looks from one to the other before he asks, with a smile . . .*

THE KING. Abdication?

BRUCKNER. Yes.

THE KING. Is this wise of you? It was n't in the bargain. You won't let me go unless I formally abdicate. But if I don't want to go . . . suppose I say No?

MADRASSY. How can you? In a week's time . . . with your men dispersed . . . you 'll be helpless.

THE KING. While I 've breath in my body I can still say No.

MADRASSY. The answer to that, Sir, is one I don't want to make . . . even in words. Nor does Mr. Bruckner, I feel sure.

*But the KING will have none of "It hurts me more than it does you."*

THE KING. But why not? You could retire again . . . with whooping-cough, perhaps, this time . . . to your Ministry of Education, while they tried me and shot me. Your views upon regicide, Mr. Bruckner, are very practical, I understand. There 's no surer way, of course, to bring back my son in my place able to make a clean sweep of the lot of you. But you 'll have thought of that.

MADRASSY. Does it follow, Sir, because nothing could be sillier than to make a martyr of you . . . that we shan't do it . . . shan't have to do it whether we like it or not?

THE KING. Madrassy, you won't frighten me . . . and I'm sorry you think you can. But you'd depress anyone . . . friend or foe! Are you really so helpless? Is this what democracy has come to? Are you sure I'm not wanted here . . . are you quite sure?

*Through the door in the hoarding there approaches somewhat diffidently MR. GEORGE PETER NAGY, the MAYOR OF ZIMONY. A plump little robin redbreast of a man, all that a Mayor should be.*

THE MAYOR. Most humbly begging your Majesty's pardon.

THE KING. Not at all! Come along, Mr. Mayor. Sorry you've been kept about. Seen Colonel Guastalla?

THE MAYOR. The Colonel is too busy.

THE KING. He is busy for the moment. Quite right to come to me, then. What can I do for you? Do you three know each other? Dr. Madrassy . . . Mr. Bruckner . . . Mr. George Peter Nagy, Mayor of Zimony.

THE MAYOR. Perhaps your Majesty will be good enough to tell me . . . since no one else takes the trouble to . . . if everything has been settled . . . what is settled about us?

THE KING. Why . . .

*Before he can get further STEPHEN CZERNYAK returns, enough of angry import about him for the KING to ask quickly . . .*

What's wrong, Stephen?

*CZERNYAK'S eyes fall on the MAYOR; a pleasing civilian object for any soldier in a rage.*

CZERNYAK. Oh . . . you've sneaked in, have you? Just as well! Horvath insists he many occupy the town, Sir. I object. You support me, may I take it?

THE KING. After four hours' talk . . . are n't we clear about that?

CZERNYAK. I think so. He's not to advance his troops.

MADRASSY. The town's on our flank, does he say?

CZERNYAK. A trick, was it?

MADRASSY. We settled in Council before we left that whatever happens we were to occupy. I told Horvath to be precise. He said he hated to hurt your Majesty's feelings.

*If the KING did not scent trouble ahead he might laugh outright at this.* CZERNYAK, meanwhile, rounds furiously on the MAYOR.

CZERNYAK. And you told General Horvath this morning, did you, that you 'd welcome his troops?

THE MAYOR. I did.

CZERNYAK. [*To the KING.*] The thanks you get, Sir, for not billeting and requisitioning. The town has been in bounds, Dr. Madrassy, for five hundred men a day . . . and only side arms carried . . . so that this fellow's tradesmen could rob them at leisure . . . while we 've been lying out in barns and pigsties.

MADRASSY. And you 've been running my blockade, Mr. Mayor.

THE MAYOR. We have. I could n't let the town starve . . . and hungry soldiers would n't have sat quiet here very long. They 'd have been at our throats first and at yours next. But it has been a pretty poor blockade. I 've not been so certain you did n't mean us to run it.

MADRASSY. You must not accuse me of duplicity, if you please.

THE MAYOR. Everything has cost more in consequence, of course!

*The KING cannot let this pass unappreciated.*

THE KING. I take off my hat to you, Madrassy. But why did you say you would welcome the troops, Mr. Mayor?

THE MAYOR. Because he told me he meant to march in on me whether I liked it or not. So what better could I say?

CZERNYAK. Can you and your kind never think of anyone's interests but your own?

THE MAYOR. It 's not for me to indulge in fine feelings at this town's expense. I 'm not made Mayor for that. Give me my own choice . . . I 'm for his Majesty.

THE KING. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

THE MAYOR. It stands to reason! I look up to your Majesty . . . and that makes it easier for others to look up to me. And your Majesty . . . and her Majesty, I must say . . . have been most affable. A good deal affabler than ever the Mayoress and I can afford to be. And here's real history going on. I could wave a flag with the best. But then again . . . what's all this to-ing and fro-ing for? To do us plain folk good . . . if what we're told is true. We thank you. Zimony was fought over in the war . . . you won't expect us to forget that, will you? We've built it up again . . . not so different to what it was. Leave us the good we've got . . . that's all we ask. This country's a bit sick of these squabbings and manœuvrings . . . if I may say so . . . and we did hope your Majesty's coming back meant that you'd just say the word. . . .

THE KING. What word, Mr. Mayor?

THE MAYOR. Ah . . . well . . . there! People come quarrelling to me . . . I listen . . . I've got to. I let them talk till they're tired . . . there's not much else I can do . . . and as often as not they don't seem to know what they're quarrelling about. And I say to myself: Now, there ought to be some word . . . ! But if your Majesty does n't know it . . . I'm sure there's nobody does. Well . . . if it's still not settled what's to happen to us, I must wait till it is. Honoured and obliged by this interview, your Majesty, General and gentlemen, I'm sure.

*The MAYOR departs, carrying off, we must agree, the honours of the discussion.*

THE KING. He has done his best for everybody, has the Mayor. You must see he does n't suffer, Madrassy.

CZERNYAK. Meanwhile, Sir . . . is Horvath to put his troops in the town? With his guns over the river . . . when the armistice ends he could tell us to surrender or shoot us to bits.

MADRASSY. Shall we have Horvath back and discuss the point, Sir?

THE KING. Certainly not. We settled and signed. Tell General Horvath from me that as a soldier and a gentleman I expect him to behave like one.

MADRASSY. We shall have to override him, then.

THE KING. You may. You won't override me.

MADRASSY. If we 'd brought up the point, Sir, you 'd have yielded it.

THE KING. How do you know?

MADRASSY. Now that you 're beaten . . .

CZERNYAK. We 're not beaten.

MADRASSY. . . . your troops may get out of hand.

THE KING. Nonsense! I give you my word to keep order in the town.

MADRASSY. If we 'd chosen to fight . . .

CZERNYAK. Well . . . you did n't.

MADRASSY. . But if you mean to disband when the week 's over, Sir . . . what difference does it make? Be reasonable!

THE KING. Here are men ready to give their lives for me. And you ask me to put them to shame before you? They shall go home as honourably as they came.

MADRASSY. I can't give way now. And I don't go back to Karlsburg, Sir, without your word that you 'll abdicate.

THE KING. Or your loyal colleagues will be saying that I 've bribed or cajoled you. Mr. Bruckner 's a witness I don't try to. Is n't that what he 's here for? Or will he be suspect now? I condole with you both. I 'd sooner sweep a crossing than make one with such a crew.

MADRASSY. Do you mean to make us fight for you . . . after all?

THE KING. Give me choice of weapons . . . yes, I 'll fight you and beat you! And you 'd thank me.

MADRASSY. Well, Bruckner?

MR. BRUCKNER *takes a second or so to consider.*



BRUCKNER. We 'd better go and talk to Horvath.

MADRASSY. Can we load the blame on him? I 'll try if you will. There 's his professional pride to reckon with. Ours . . . as you say, Sir . . . is to save our skins.

*These scholastic ironies do not interest MR. BRUCKNER, and he has gone. DR. MADRASSY follows. He can hardly be out of hearing before CZERNYAK lets loose with . . .*

CZERNYAK. Sir . . . Sir . . . break off with them! They 've given us the chance. Send them packing. Give me my head now and I 'll have you in Karlsburg in a week. I can do it! Horvath 's been blabbing. His command 's at sixes and sevens . . . rotted with politics. It may be a bloody business with the regiment on our flank here. But mop that up . . . the rest won't fight. They might come over . . . be thankful to have gentlemen to officer them again. Bruckner thinks so . . . you can see. He 's had a quiet look round and he 's for backing down. And what the devil do you want?

*This last is to LIEUTENANT VIDA, who has appeared, saluting.*

VIDA. Sorry, Sir. Did n't know you were with his Majesty.

THE KING. Never mind!

VIDA. Bakay 's here, Sir.

CZERNYAK. I can't bother with him now.

VIDA. Very well, Sir. His sentence was read to his battalion. They did n't take it well.

CZERNYAK. What do I care? Keep him locked up till to-morrow.

VIDA. Very good, Sir. Have you ordered the goods-siding guns to be shifted?

CZERNYAK. No.

VIDA. I thought perhaps you did n't want these gentlemen from Karlsburg to get too close a look at them.

CZERNYAK. Massimo has done it on his own account. Quite right.

THE KING. Who 's Bakay? What 's he sentenced for?

CZERNYAK. Our crack sergeant-major. Six months' cells, is n't it?

VIDA. Yes, sir . . . for spreading disaffection.

CZERNYAK. I'll have to let him off. We've no place left to put him. How many in the sheds now, Vida?

VIDA. Thirty-four, I think.

CZERNYAK. Keep the fellow about. I may find time for him.

LIEUTENANT VIDA *salutes — smartness itself; discipline seems good under* STEPHEN CZERNYAK *— and goes.*

CZERNYAK *turns to the KING again, as if there 'd been no interruption.*

CZERNYAK. For God's sake, Sir! Before they give in and send back to tell me! It's our last chance. Take it . . . for God's sake!

*The KING is looking at him affectionately; but he shakes his head.*

THE KING. We must wage a war for you some day . . . against the heathen.

CZERNYAK. Very well. Since you came I've obeyed orders . . . I can do that. But I don't understand you, Sir. Every chance we've given you . . . you've thrown away. It's wicked! I'll say it . . . if it's no use to say it. You don't want to win.

THE KING. I want to do more than that now.

CZERNYAK. But disband us . . . you've nothing left even to bargain with.

THE KING. I can't bargain. You think I'll never get to Karlsburg unless I fight my way there. You're a soldier . . . you must think so. But men, remember, are held prisoners of their success . . . they walk ever after in the way of it. These two . . . Bruckner . . . Madrassy! They're in power . . . and helpless . . . prisoners of the men that keep them there. Helpless, we may find soon, not to bring their guns up and start blowing us to bits . . . though they don't want to . . . they

know what comes of that in the end. If I let you start blowing them to bits, dear Stephen . . . I may ride Snowjacket into Karlsburg in triumph . . . but I should be a prisoner of that power.

CZERNYAK. It seems to me, Sir . . . once you win . . . no matter how you win . . . you can have your own way after.

THE KING. Do you believe that? I recommend you not to believe it. When I'm rid of you all I'm not sure I shan't walk to Karlsburg. It's only sixty miles . . . and a straight road. Who could stop me? The people would be friendly. And when next I open Parliament I shall walk down the hill from the Castle . . . frock coat, top hat, with an umbrella if it's raining. That's half a mile, no more. The police could keep the street clear. Will it be very unkingly?

CZERNYAK. Not if you do it, Sir.

THE KING. Worth trying . . . d'you think?

CZERNYAK. I don't believe in miracles, I fear.

THE KING. Nor I. And I don't know the Mayor's magic word. It would be the natural thing to do. You don't believe in my divine right, Stephen. But the fact is . . . if I have n't that, I've no other. Nor has any man. This time I must put it to the proof. I'll be off for my walk round the farm now. If they don't knuckle under . . . those three . . . you can send for me. But I fancy they will.

*And the KING departs, leaving CZERNYAK to set his teeth to the worst. He rouses himself as one does to carry on routine, and calls . . .*

CZERNYAK. Orderly!

*The door in the hoarding through which all the main traffic has been passing (the one opposite that of the KING'S departure) opens. Almost before the orderly can appear . . .*

Have that prisoner sent in.

*The door closes. CZERNYAK drops into a chair and sits brooding. Meanwhile his mother has appeared at the railway-carriage door.*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. She wants news, Stephen.

CZERNYAK. We've signed . . . but there's a hitch.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. She won't stir out till they've gone.

CZERNYAK. I'm to offer her Horvath's profoundest homage.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. For heaven's sake, don't! She's up, at any rate! Cousin Basil's playing chess with her. But I've a mind to pack Ella home and sprain my ankle and take to my own bed. Then she'd have her clothes to brush, at least. This is a bitter business for you, my dear.

*A few years ago — for he is still young enough — the last words would have broken him down; a few years hence he might soften to them. Now he only sets his teeth the harder.*

CZERNYAK. I'd not have asked him to thank me, even! I wish she were the man.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. She's not very wise.

CZERNYAK. What does that matter?

LIEUTENANT VIDA *now returns with his prisoner under guard, and* COUNTESS CZERNYAK *discreetly stands aloof.*

SERGEANT-MAJOR BAKAY, *the prisoner, is a hard-bitten soldier with all the marks of long service on him. He fought through the Great War, evidently. He is disciplined to the last inch of self-control and can conduct himself with dignity even under these circumstances, though one can tell that he takes them very badly indeed. VIDA hands CZERNYAK the paper with the man's sentence on it, and everyone stands to attention. CZERNYAK glances through the paper and then scowls at its victim.*

CZERNYAK. Three days' field-punishment . . . ! Pleasant for his regiment . . . won't it be . . . to see their senior sergeant-major chained to a gun-carriage! And six months' cells . . . as and when possible.

BAKAY. I'd rather be shot, General.

CZERNYAK. Who asked you what you'd rather be? Am I to waste good bullets on you?

BAKAY. We've not spent many of 'em so far.

CZERNYAK. Hold your impertinent tongue when I 'm talking to you! Why is n't the fellow's face washed before he's brought to me? Can't you be shut in a coal-shed for a few hours without messing yourself up like this? What sort of a soldier are you?

*At this juncture ROGER DOD strolls back; but, finding a row on, he also discreetly stands aloof.*

BAKAY. Try me and see! Put me to fight, I say . . . which I came for. Bring a bull out of those fields and I'll fight it.

CZERNYAK. You'll fight or not as you're ordered. And you won't ask why. You're fed . . . you get your pay.

BAKAY. And let's earn it honest . . . was all I ever meant . . . for that swine of a corporal to go peaching on me. He's for it . . . front or back . . . the first scrap that sees me alongside him. This whole countryside's making game of us. Push through then, I say . . . and show 'em. Let us loose a day or two in Karlsburg . . . and we'll show 'em. And let the cowards go home again . . . whoever they are!

*The last three words show us well enough what SERGEANT-MAJOR BAKAY'S real offences of the tongue were. CZERNYAK now "plays the game" with a vengeance — a vengeance on himself and the prisoner and all the world for having to play it.*

CZERNYAK. Listen you to me. His Majesty is graciously pleased on the happy occasion of this armistice to remit your sentence. And I reduce you to the ranks. Cut off his stripes. Cut them off with that pen-knife here and now. Give him double fatigues. Set him digging latrines for a week. And I trust you're grateful.

*As an experienced sergeant-major, BAKAY can at least admire the artistry of abuse.*

BAKAY. His Majesty's a kind gentleman, I don't doubt. And I'd follow you to hell, General . . . which I set out to . . . and you know it!

CZERNYAK. Much obliged! See I'm told, Vida, when they want me in the office. Take him away. Wash his face!

BAKAY *is removed. In the succeeding calm DOD strolls forward, and COUNTESS CZERNYAK leaves the lobby of the carriage too.*

DOD. Feel better? Nothing like a bout of slanging for expelling poisons from the system. Discipline's been amazing good though . . . considering. I give you full marks. A little sport might have helped. Or even theatricals! When bad blood's brewing set fellows to making fools of themselves!

CZERNYAK. We've managed to give you a sporting enough time, I hope.

DOD. Thank you.

CZERNYAK. The whole business ordained by Providence, no doubt, to that end.

DOD. Providence can beat you . . . and the rest of us . . . when it comes to irony, General.

CZERNYAK *surrenders to this impervious Englishman at discretion; he has a liking for him and some respect, too.*

CZERNYAK. Have you settled on your next adventure?

DOD. Yes. Air surveying in South Siam. Come along and learn to click the camera. You'll need a change. I must see this through, though.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. How will it end, Captain Dod? As you don't care . . . perhaps you know.

GUASTALLA *arrives, in a bit of a hurry.*

GUASTALLA. You're wanted.

CZERNYAK *gives him a glance; then, without a word, gets up and goes. A glum silence falls.*

DOD. Has the enemy given in?

GUASTALLA. Oh, yes!

DOD. Poor Czernyak! Cheer up . . . lots of queer things may happen yet.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. They should never have come back.



It was hopeless. That world has vanished. Why did you let them come, Colonel?

GUASTALLA. How could I stop them? They had to try. I did n't think it was hopeless.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Then you did n't think.

*The worries of the affair — and they all fall on him, the bigger ones at second hand, the smaller quite his own — are beginning to try GUASTALLA'S perfect temper.*

GUASTALLA. I'm not asked to think. I'm a shorthand-typist with good table manners, warranted to look well in uniform.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. He must abdicate now.

GUASTALLA. She'd sooner die.

*COLONEL HADIK has appeared in the doorway of the railway carriage, and he stands there as if listening — not to the now desultory conversation below him, however.*

DOD. Of course I may be wrong in thinking I could settle the whole business in ten minutes if everyone concerned would only show a little commonsense. But in my dear country we do learn to settle things. We're always scrapping . . . no harm in that! But no good in it unless you make friends after. . . .

HADIK. Did you hear gunfire?

*They all turn at the sudden question — and stare; but*

*COLONEL HADIK is an odd old gentleman.*

GUASTALLA. No.

DOD. No.

GUASTALLA. The armistice is signed, Colonel.

HADIK. So I'm told.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. How goes the game, Cousin Basil?

HADIK. I now give her Majesty a rook and a knight only. With patience she might make a player.

*He does not move from where he stands, but listens still. The rest take up the train of their thoughts again; and DOD'S talk flows sententiously on.*



DOD. Frontiers are your trouble. Frontiers make for xenophobia. . . .

GUASTALLA. For what?

DOD. A pet of a word, ain't it? . . . and I know what it means! There 's a lot to be said for landing in a country from the sea . . . especially if you 've been sick on it . . . makes you feel friendlier to the foreign devil.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. I see anarchy ahead here.

GUASTALLA. The Powers might interfere then. I wish they would.

DOD. That 's when they won't. There 's prestige in a little peaceful Occupation. But when bombs go off . . . and soldiers get nerves . . . and someone says Shoot . . . and you hit the wrong people . . . and the Pacifists at home make a fuss . . . ! I say, Colonel . . . your ears are good.

*For now they have all heard it.*

HADIK. Our twenty pounder with the faulty primer, that time, I should say.

GUASTALLA. But nobody can be firing now!

DOD. Whose car can I steal?

HADIK. It 's a mile away and more . . . coming into the wind.

DOD. It 's towards the town.

*DOD is already off and away. GUASTALLA calls after him.*

GUASTALLA. Send word!

DOD. Right!

*Into the doorway of the other carriage comes the QUEEN. She is pale and excited. She looks a tragic figure as she stands there, a long wrap thrown round her.*

THE QUEEN. There 's fighting!

GUASTALLA. Something 's wrong, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. They 've attacked us?

GUASTALLA. Our guns are firing.

THE QUEEN. Thank God!

GUASTALLA. But we signed the Armistice, . . . not half an hour ago.

*She does not hear this . . . or heed!*

THE QUEEN. Ja-ja . . . we're fighting . . . we're not disgraced.

GUASTALLA. Where's his Majesty?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. He went for his walk.

THE QUEEN. There's another!

GUASTALLA. Ours?

HADIK. I could n't tell.

GUASTALLA. Will he hear them? Please don't stir from this spot, Ma'am.

GUASTALLA *goes after the KING.*

THE QUEEN. That last was closer, was n't it?

HADIK. The wind.

COLONEL HADIK *has come down from the carriage doorway and in it there appears ELLA, COUNTESS CZERNYAK'S maid, looking a little startled.*

THE QUEEN. They've tried to trick us. . . . I prayed God they might . . . and we're paying them out. I thought first: Henry kept it as a surprise for me. Dear Colonel . . . did you think you'd never hear your guns again? And I'd taken your Bishop . . . the one on the left. I was wondering where you'd gone.

HADIK. You should not have taken that Bishop, Ma'am.

*More firing, evidently; and the QUEEN'S spirits rise higher still.*

THE QUEEN. Two together!

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Get her Majesty's fur cloak, Ella. You must n't catch cold.

THE QUEEN. I want my field glasses . . . quick. We'll climb the signal box . . . we can see lots from there. And another!

HADIK. That makes the full battery.

ELLA *having gone for the cloak, COUNTESS CZERNYAK must*

*needs go herself for the glasses. The QUEEN turns to COLONEL HADIK again in childish joy.*

THE QUEEN. This waiting here . . . I don't know how I've borne it! We won't stop so long at the next station . . . will we?

HADIK. Very undisciplined practice! I hope they won't fire Number Four again too soon . . . or they'll hurt themselves.

THE QUEEN. What's that queer buzzing?

HADIK. Machine guns, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. Let's get as close as we can.

*She can wait no more, but is off just as ELLA appears with the cloak, which COLONEL HADIK takes from her with . . .*

HADIK. Give it to me, Ella. Stay you here.

*And he follows the QUEEN with it as COUNTESS CZERNYAK comes out with the field glasses and speeds after her too. ELLA is left with eyes staring wide. . . .*

*. . . Some little time must have passed, for though the dusk was gathering as the firing started, it would be quite dark now if the platform were not lit by the steel glare of the high-swinging arc lamps. The QUEEN, glad enough (if she thought about it) of her fur cloak, is waiting, still and tense. COUNTESS CZERNYAK is watching at one of the hoarding doors. ELLA comes to the door of the railway carriage.*

ELLA. There's another motor car come back, please.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Whose?

*COLONEL GUASTALLA arrives in all haste, and her Majesty pounces on him.*

GUASTALLA. Here's the King, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. You're to tell him they're not to blame. You're to praise them . . . you're to praise them!

GUASTALLA. Ma'am . . . it's a terrible business . . . and a very difficult business. I beg you to be careful what you say.

*The KING comes quickly in; and there is a look on his face that we have not seen before.*

THE QUEEN. Henry. . . .

THE KING. Fetch me my sword, somebody! Don't talk to me now, please. Where's General Horvath? Guastalla . . . find Czernyak. He's to come here to me.

GUASTALLA. General Horvath has just driven up, Sir!

THE KING. Will somebody fetch me that sword?

*They are all staring at the KING; and, no one else moving, with a half articulate "Yes, y' Majesty" ELLA vanishes into the carriage.*

GUASTALLA. I've not seen Count Czernyak, Sir. I'll send to find him.

*GUASTALLA departs. That word "sword" has been music to the QUEEN.*

THE QUEEN. Henry . . . you're going to lead them! Oh, at last! You'll draw your sword and lead them!

*The KING stares at her in blank angry amazement.*

THE KING. Do you know what has happened?

*She meets him with defiance.*

THE QUEEN. Yes, I do.

THE KING. Blackguards and brigands!

THE QUEEN. But not if you lead them! God's giving you another chance . . . to draw your sword and lead them. On your horse too . . . your white horse!

*He rasps out a very harsh . . .*

THE KING. Nonsense!

THE QUEEN. I could!

*And harshness turning cold . . .*

THE KING. Please try not to make a fool of yourself.

*The QUEEN cries out in despair.*

THE QUEEN. What does that matter!

*STEPHEN CZERNYAK is here now; wrought to a desperate pitch, and controlled. He salutes and stands to attention as might any subaltern.*

CZERNYAK. Sir?

THE KING. What section began it?

CZERNYAK. Battery A took their guns across the bridge about two o'clock.

THE KING. Without orders!

CZERNYAK. The men themselves.

THE KING. No officers?

CZERNYAK. Two went later, Sir. They did n't know the armistice was signed. It's fair to say that. Nor was it.

THE KING. It was when the Kathy battalion went in.

CZERNYAK. Yes, Sir.

THE KING. Officers too.

CZERNYAK. Seven, Sir.

THE KING. They knew by then?

CZERNYAK. I can't say, Sir.

THE KING. You're their chief. You've no excuse?

CZERNYAK. I don't make any.

*Suddenly the KING's wrath blazes.*

THE KING. Mother of God! Could n't they at least find armed men to shoot at? None of Horvath's troops in the town?

CZERNYAK. No, Sir.

THE KING. Did you know that, Rosamund?

*He is met again with an obstinately defiant . . .*

THE QUEEN. Yes.

CZERNYAK. They went for the Town Hall. They did n't shoot at first. They warned all the women to stand clear. These tradesmen have been cheating them for weeks. They'd thought when we did advance . . .

THE KING. There'd be looting.

CZERNYAK. They're human. They want their own back. So did you, Sir.

THE KING. Finish your report.

CZERNYAK. They're barricaded now in the big square . . . where the White Hart Inn is . . . fifteen hundred of them. I

kept Horvath with me . . . and the telephone's cut, so his staff has had no orders yet . . . unless those politicians have chipped in. . . .

THE KING. And we gave him our word to protect the town if he'd keep his troops out of it?

CZERNYAK. Yes. I sent for my own Eisenthalers to come and round the fools up. . . .

*He stops. This is, to him, the worst of all.*

THE KING. Well?

CZERNYAK *can only make a helpless gesture.*

They won't stir!

CZERNYAK. They're paraded. I've been talking to them.

THE KING. Where?

*Does his Majesty mean to see what he can do? CZERNYAK checks him with the bitter chivalry of . . .*

CZERNYAK. No . . . don't, Sir. They've been talking to me . . . some of them! I'd no answer. Give me my orders, please.

THE KING. I've no orders.

*For the first time STEPHEN CZERNYAK loses self-control.*

CZERNYAK. I wish to God I were with them, then . . . waiting to be shot! You've broken me, Sir . . . you've broken me!

*By this ELLA has returned with the sword. She has indeed been standing with it at the KING'S side for several moments before he perceives her.*

THE KING. What is it?

ELLA. Please, your Majesty . . . the sword.

THE KING. Thank you, Ella.

*Though he thanks her with his customary courtesy and takes the trouble to remember her name, ELLA is glad enough to be off. A silence falls. The KING stands there, sword in hand, motionless. At last the QUEEN asks (though by the tone of her voice we may guess she knows the answer) . . .*

THE QUEEN. What are we waiting for, Henry?

THE KING. For General Horvath. Won't you go in?

THE QUEEN. No.

THE KING. Very well.

*Silence again. Then comes GUASTALLA, ushering in GENERAL HORVATH, who is followed, shadow-like, by the correct CAPTAIN PAPP. HORVATH is in a state of empurpled distraction.*

GUASTALLA. General Horvath, Sir.

THE KING. General . . . my troops have mutinied and disgraced me. I surrender my sword to you.

*While HORVATH is recovering from the shock of this, we can just hear the QUEEN'S low, bitter . . .*

THE QUEEN. God forgive us!

*HORVATH, when he does recover, all but bursts into tears. Anything — anything sooner than take this sword that the KING is holding out to him!*

HORVATH. Oh . . . please don't! No . . . I do beg your Majesty not to! Anyone else, of course, that's mixed up in it . . . if they'd like to surrender I'd be only too pleased . . . and to see they come to no harm. But not your Majesty. No . . . I really could n't!

THE KING. I am offering you my sword, Sir.

HORVATH. But I only took command . . . I told them . . . because I was devoted to your Majesty's true interests . . . and feeling in a sense I was still in your Majesty's service . . . for your Majesty's dear grandfather gave me my commission with his own hands . . . forty-six years ago in April. And how can I . . .

*The KING'S black rage has abated; but he is now very rapidly losing his temper.*

THE KING. How much longer am I to hold this sword?

HORVATH. And everything can be settled quite simply. There are four inns in that square . . . and the silly fellows will all be drunk by to-night. And I've talked to the Mayor and he's most amenable. And if Count Czernyak will be good



enough to help me I can arrest the lot without any trouble. And Madrassy will keep the worst out of the papers. . . .

*The KING can stand no more of it; he throws the sword on the ground with a great clatter and vanishes into the railway carriage. While this parley has been on, DOD, and, a little later, BRUCKNER have arrived on the scene. Needless to say they do not obtrude themselves. DOD, one notices, has been in the wars. The KING departed, that emblematic sword draws all looks to it, till the looker can break the spell. Then the QUEEN'S voice again ends the silence — though she is speaking half to herself.*

THE QUEEN. Common men do the brave thing. Why is n't it the right thing? I'm sorry they fired on the town. Why should they surrender? What happens if they won't? I hope they won't.

*By this she has turned to HORVATH with something of her old defiant fire. He puffs protestingly.*

HORVATH. But they must! It's most irregular! We must have order. My own men may go next. The whole country's in such a state! But you're not to distress yourself, Ma'am. Count Czernyak and I will settle it all in the friendliest way.

*He turns, and is most surprised to find the correct CAPTAIN PAPP, at his heels.*

Where's Dr. Madrassy? Did n't you find him? Don't follow me about. Don't stand there like a tailor's dummy. Tongue-tied fool!

*Poor CAPTAIN PAPP, at this cruelly appropriate placarding, turns and flees. HORVATH feels a little better for his outburst.*

Your Majesty will excuse me . . . if I leave you.

*As if they were back in the Palace and the old days had come again, he makes the ceremonial triple bow of leave-taking before he goes. No one else moves. They have their eyes on the QUEEN. She must speak, she feels.*

THE QUEEN. Is there nothing left to do?

*Then, suddenly, she begins to shake all over.* COUNTESS CZERNYAK, who has not been far from her, comes up and touches her arm.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. My dear . . . how cold you are! Come in.

THE QUEEN. No. . . . I'm not cold.

*With a great effort she steadies herself.*

Has much damage been done? Some to you, Captain Dod, I fear. How was that?

DOD. It's nothing, Ma'am. I was helping put out a fire. An enraged old lady threw a chopper at me. The men had a gaudy hour of it. Not so many casualties . . . no one dead yet, I think.

THE QUEEN. Countess Czernyak will bandage you properly if you'll go in with her. We had everything ready . . . in case.

*This, in all its courtesy, is a command; and without a word* COUNTESS CZERNYAK *and he go into the carriage. Once more she must speak.*

THE QUEEN. Are we prisoners?

CZERNYAK. If Mr. Bruckner will be good enough to pick up that sword.

*No one so far has noticed* MR. BRUCKNER, *commonplace and obscure in the background. The* QUEEN *looks at him now as she might at the incarnation of some dangerous disease that had just declared itself. He shakes his head, with what passes, on his countenance, for a smile, as who should say "It's none of my business."* GUASTALLA *interposes with . . .*

GUASTALLA. May I present Mr. Bruckner, Ma'am?

MR. BRUCKNER, *being presented, and becoming the centre of attention, proceeds deliberately and very forcibly and rather more elaborately to present himself.*

BRUCKNER. Haven't we had enough of this foolery? If we've anything to fight about we ought to be fighting. If

you still want to win you've a chance left. A long chance! But if it's your last . . . better than none!

THE QUEEN. What chance?

BRUCKNER. As you have started in. . . . Why not keep Horvath chatting a while and dash for the best of our guns? If you get them you might beat us. Not a pretty trick! But if you win you'll be whitewashed. And if you're not . . . you'll have won.

GUASTALLA. His Majesty has surrendered.

BRUCKNER. What does that matter? Lock him in . . . before we lock you in. Have n't you been itching to? Why did n't you . . . weeks ago? You might have been in Karlsburg by this. Now it won't be so easy. You can let him loose and stick a crown on him once you've landed him there.

*All this leaves them dumbfounded a moment — well it may! Then, for all comment, comes CZERNYAK'S cold . . .*

CZERNYAK. You had better find somebody, Sir, to pick up that sword.

BRUCKNER. Very well.

*He turns on his heel. But suddenly the QUEEN'S voice stops him.*

THE QUEEN. Mr. Bruckner.

BRUCKNER. Madam.

THE QUEEN. Are you laughing at us? Is this a trap?

BRUCKNER. No.

THE QUEEN. I'm stupid, then. If it's good advice . . . why do you give it to us? Suppose we take it?

*GUASTALLA gasps with horror.*

GUASTALLA. How could we take it, Ma'am?

*She appeals to STEPHEN CZERNYAK, who responds like a man half hypnotised.*

THE QUEEN. Count Czernyak?

CZERNYAK. It would n't be a very pretty trick.

THE QUEEN. Do you want us to win, Mr. Bruckner?

BRUCKNER. There are things I want less.

GUASTALLA. Shall I fetch his Majesty, Ma'am?

THE QUEEN. No.

CZERNYAK. General Horvath is waiting for me, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. He can wait.

*We could detect then a slight tremor in CZERNYAK'S voice; in hers, none.*

BRUCKNER. Here 's what I 'm after . . . it 's simple enough. That starved pedant Madrassy has tangled me up in his politics too. I want him sent back to his schoolbooks. So do you.

CZERNYAK. And further.

BRUCKNER. Very well. I 've been for fighting and making you fight. Let 's know who 's to be master. This wretched country needs to know . . . for it needs one. I mean to be its master if I can be . . . and there are men that will back me. Yes . . . tell my colleagues in the Ladies' Waiting Room that, Colonel Guastalla . . . if you think it 's news to them. If I can't be . . . I 'd as soon have you rattling your sabre. Or you, Madam! You seem to believe in yourself. That 's the first thing. People with nothing better to believe in will believe in you.

*Her Majesty stiffens against such familiarity.*

THE QUEEN. Possibly! What can you do for us . . . what can you do? Don't interfere, please. Don't speak! I need no advice.

*For to GUASTALLA'S — and even CZERNYAK'S — horror, though to MR. BRUCKNER'S grim amusement, she is unfastening from her neck the pearls she always wears; and it is obvious what she means to do with them.*

BRUCKNER. Do you want to bribe me?

THE QUEEN. Yes. If this is n't enough . . . tell me how.

*And BRUCKNER finds the necklace in his hands. He smiles very grimly indeed.*

BRUCKNER. What 's it worth?

THE QUEEN. I 'm afraid I don't know. Quite a lot. I could sign something as well.

*But he hands it back, with what is very nearly a bow.*

BRUCKNER. I respect you, Madam, for the attempt. I am not above bribes. But you have n't my price in your pocket for the moment . . . and I should n't like to cheat you. Besides . . . once a man has taken his bribe he's no longer worth it, remember! No . . . I must fight you for a bit . . . and beat you if I can. Thank me for that, at least.

CZERNYAK *has taken his decision.*

CZERNYAK. Tell your colleagues in the Waiting Room, Mr. Bruckner, that I'm taking your advice. But if I beat you and have my way . . . I'll skin you alive.

BRUCKNER. You'll be quite right to.

CZERNYAK. I don't ask your Majesty's approval.

THE QUEEN. You have it.

GUASTALLA. For God's sake don't say that, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. You have it.

CZERNYAK, *with her clarion note to hearten him, has gone.*

*She says swiftly to GUASTALLA.*

I'll tell the king.

GUASTALLA. Very well, Ma'am.

BRUCKNER *notes this.*

BRUCKNER. There's nothing more then, I fancy, that I can do for your Majesty.

THE QUEEN. You'll do what best pays you. . . . I understand that. If you find a little later it might pay you better to be beaten . . . I'll see that you're paid.

*She says it with such contempt that he cannot resist a masked retort.*

BRUCKNER. Your Majesty is too kind. A post at Court, perhaps . . . in uniform.

CAPTAIN DOD, *at this moment, comes from the carriage, his arm beautifully bandaged. The QUEEN, having turned her back upon the unspeakable BRUCKNER, greets him graciously.*

THE QUEEN. That's right, Captain Dod. Come and have it dressed again, please . . . to-morrow morning.

*And she enters the carriage. BRUCKNER finds that GUASTALLA is staring at him in no friendly way. So he says with a certain briskness . . .*

BRUCKNER. We'd better be getting back to our lines before trouble starts. Or will you make us prisoners? Etiquette apart, I don't recommend it. Horvath in command is worth ten thousand men to the other side, any day.

*He departs, jauntily for him. DOD is a little puzzled.*

DOD. What's up now?

GUASTALLA. God knows!

DOD. Light me a cigarette . . . there's a good chap.

*For his bandaged arm makes this a hard job.*

DOD. I wonder if they looted the printer's. We could get in first with this mutiny story. If I give it a twist our way it might even do us a bit of good. Better copy than an armistice, anyhow! That's old Hadik's, is n't it?

*His eye had caught the sword still lying where the KING flung it.*

GUASTALLA. Yes . . . I had to borrow one.

DOD. Don't leave it lying about, then. Besides . . . it looks so silly.

*GUASTALLA stiffens with correctitude.*

GUASTALLA. I can't touch it.

DOD. Can't you? I can.

*And he picks it up without more ado.*

## ACT IV

*A railway carriage is cramped quarters for a three weeks' stay; but, by dint of removing some of the fixed furniture, this twenty-year old saloon has been turned into a tolerable sitting-room for the KING and QUEEN. A table with inkstand and papers on it, set against one of the line of windows that look out, drearily enough, to the further side of the station, shows that he conducts his business there. Another little table in the corner may be GUASTALLA'S; another, by the odds and ends on it, is the QUEEN'S. It is afternoon, and a cold grey autumnal afternoon at that. The place is empty. But COLONEL HADIK opens one of the narrow doors to usher in SIR CHARLES CRUWYS, saying as he does so . . .*

HADIK. Colonel Guastalla, Sir, is not yet back from the funeral.

SIR CHARLES. The funeral?

HADIK. But I was to tell his Majesty at once of your arrival. The British Minister?

SIR CHARLES. Yes.

*COLONEL HADIK passes across to the other narrow door and passes through it to find the KING. We notice that he is carrying a large official-looking letter. He has become, by sheer devotion to his simple duties, the perfect butler.*

*SIR CHARLES CRUWYS is no more than fifty, one supposes, but he has already acquired the silvery hair and silky benevolence of the distinguished diplomat. He is due for promotion as soon as these Carpathian troubles are settled — though when will that be? He would not, in fact, have*



*been left here these four years but for the need of a good man at such a post. He is, you discover after a little, a very "good man" indeed. Do not be deceived by that air of taking everything more seriously than his business, with which the diplomatist learns to avoid the risk of indiscreet talk about it. (Sometimes, of course, appearances are not deceptive.)*

SIR CHARLES, awaiting his Majesty, gives a glance round; then, apparently, he finds the place remarkably cold, for he starts to put on the motoring coat, carried over his arm. While he is doing so COLONEL GUASTALLA arrives, hurriedly, as if he knew he was late. SIR CHARLES, caught with one arm in the coat and one out, asks politely . . .

SIR CHARLES. May I?

GUASTALLA. Please! It is chilly. The heating won't work without the engine . . . and the oil-stoves I asked for smell. You've not been kept waiting, I hope.

GUASTALLA, oddly enough, is carrying a bunch of flowers; red and yellow chrysanthemums. He puts this down on the table in the corner.

SIR CHARLES. I've been having a brisk half hour with the Commandant . . . your head gaoler here. He has been treating you civilly . . . has he?

GUASTALLA. He thinks so, I'm sure.

SIR CHARLES. Not quite the sort of fellow they should let represent them.

GUASTALLA. But suppose he does?

SIR CHARLES appreciates this riposte, and the disdain that inspires it. But his talk to the Commandant has worried him a little.

SIR CHARLES. That opens up unpleasant vistas.

GUASTALLA. We're cut off from news, of course. I gave my parole before they passed me through the wire not to ask for any. We've to thank you, Sir Charles, for my little outing, I think.

SIR CHARLES. I shan't be sorry to be back in Karlsburg before dark. My government escort, even, does not inspire confidence.

*The QUEEN'S entry interrupts him. She is paler than she was, visibly strained by this ordeal; graver and quieter too, her old unquestioning confidence abashed. She has a smile for SIR CHARLES, though, as she gives him her hand.*

THE QUEEN. Sir Charles Cruwys. We met long ago . . . at Stuttgart.

SIR CHARLES. Good of your Majesty to remember.

THE QUEEN. The King wishes me to be present. Do you play tennis still?

SIR CHARLES. Oh yes, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. Can you still jump the net standing?

*SIR CHARLES postures comic despair.*

SIR CHARLES. No, Ma'am. Ah . . . no!

*GUASTALLA has retrieved his flowers from the table.*

GUASTALLA. A woman ran out of a shop and asked me to bring your Majesty these.

THE QUEEN. Oh! Did you thank her for me? I hope you thanked her.

*The break in her voice tells us much. We should not have heard it but that she was taken by surprise. The KING comes in. He is as cool and cheerful as ever; rather brusquer perhaps. He shakes hands with SIR CHARLES in a businesslike way. In his other hand is that official-looking letter delivered to him by COLONEL HADIK.*

THE KING. How do you do, Sir Charles? You've had a cold drive. Please sit down. What can I do for you?

*For all this easy civility, there is a certain ring of challenge in the KING'S voice. SIR CHARLES and he face each other, as they sit, duellist-wise. The QUEEN has turned away and seated herself apart; her pale face is outlined against the pallor of the windows; she holds that simple gift of the flowers as if it were a friend's hand. As to the challenge,*

SIR CHARLES *neither accepts nor declines it. He measures his words.*

SIR CHARLES. Upon your Majesty's abdicating I am authorised by my government to offer you a suitable asylum.

THE KING. That 's very civil of them. And this that you 've brought me . . . is the form I fill up?

*He gives an almost jaunty twirl to the official-looking letter.*

SIR CHARLES. I believe so, Sir. I did not bring it. It came with me.

THE KING. A nice distinction.

SIR CHARLES'S *reply has its edge, too.*

SIR CHARLES. One clings to the correct thing . . . as long as may be.

THE KING. I expected it sooner.

SIR CHARLES. This has been a troublesomely uncertain week.

THE KING. So I gather from what reaches me of our cook's conversation with her favorite sentry. Who may I ask . . . if anyone . . . is now governing the country?

SIR CHARLES. You may well ask, Sir! Dr. Madrassy is still in office. He 'll come to-morrow, I presume, to ask that back from you . . . if he 's still in office.

*The QUEEN turns her head.*

THE QUEEN. I think, Sir Charles, that, whatever else happens, you 'll find Dr. Madrassy in office . . . till we put him out once and for all.

*This last phrase draws a quick glance from the KING; while SIR CHARLES, still courteous, grows stern.*

SIR CHARLES. Will your Majesties please face the facts of the situation? You 're prisoners here . . . and helpless. Madrassy and his mongrel government are at such odds that they 're as helpless . . . all but! In the country the bottom 's dropping out of things. The mark 's going to glory . . . the towns can't buy food . . . the peasants are digging up their guns again. And here 's winter suddenly . . . to make all worse!

THE KING. And where is Count Czernyak, if you please?

SIR CHARLES *vents a little hiss of exasperation.*

SIR CHARLES. I told them it was childish not to tell you! Czernyak and his mutineers are fifteen miles from Karlsburg.

THE KING. Thank you. So the cook and her sentry were right. There's been fighting?

SIR CHARLES. Gunfire . . . and a casualty or two, I suppose. Enough to give the newspapers headlines.

*The soldier in the KING says to GUASTALLA with a certain satisfaction . . .*

THE KING. That's fifteen miles a day, Guastalla.

GUASTALLA. Rather more, Sir.

SIR CHARLES. Horvath had orders to keep out of range. But he can't get back any further.

THE KING. How many mutineers?

SIR CHARLES. A couple of thousand still.

THE KING. And what happens next?

SIR CHARLES. That's the question. They won't surrender.

THE QUEEN. Surrender!

*High indignation is in the word. The KING explains.*

THE KING. Her Majesty approves of their conduct. I, of course, cannot.

THE QUEEN. Why should they surrender?

SIR CHARLES. They can be surrounded and shot to pieces at any moment, Ma'am. My wonder is the order's not been given. Before I get back it may be. But Madrassy won't court-martial more than a dozen of them . . . Czernyak apart, of course . . . I've his word for that . . . if they'll surrender.

THE KING. . . . and I abdicate.

THE QUEEN. Do you really think, Sir Charles, that we're to be tricked like this?

*It is an unpleasant moment, which the KING has to redeem by asking good-humouredly . . .*

THE KING. Are you tricking us?

*Her Majesty is implacable.*

THE QUEEN. Or being tricked himself!

SIR CHARLES. The diplomat finds that still less complimentary, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. Madrassy dare n't fight . . . he never has dared. And here 's his last chance to cheat us . . . and then tell men that will fight for us that there 's nothing left to fight for. Is n't that the trick? Hurry back, Sir Charles . . . or you may find Count Czernyak in Karlsburg before you . . . and his Majesty proclaimed.

SIR CHARLES. Good God, Ma'am . . . you can't think that 's possible! Two thousand men . . . all but starving . . . and not much more than their bare fists left them to fight with! D' you want them massacred? Do you, Sir?

*A moment's silence before the KING answers.*

THE KING. They know they can't win. They must know that. But they 'd sooner be killed to a man than give in. Foolish of them . . . and I must abdicate to save their skins. Will they thank me? What if they 've the right of it? Is the battle that 's worth losing . . . and the cause . . . the one battle we must fight . . . and the cause that can't be lost? Thank Madrassy for holding his hand. — It has been hard to, I 'm sure. But I almost wish I had my sword again . . . and that he 'd put me among them . . . so that I could be foolish too.

*Another moment of silence before SIR CHARLES returns to practical politics.*

SIR CHARLES. By to-morrow, Sir, I 'm promised two boats' crews from the Firefly. She was within reach, thank goodness! They 'll go on guard here . . . and if I don't like the look of things I shall pack you across the frontier whether you abdicate or not.

*"The impudencel" is probably what springs to his Majesty's lips at this; but he translates it into . . .*

THE KING. You can't do that! No government worth its salt will let you.

SIR CHARLES. I can, Sir . . . and I shall.

THE KING. I shall formally protest.

SIR CHARLES. That will make no difference.

THE KING. Really, Sir Charles . . . what business is this of yours?

SIR CHARLES. Sir . . . Carpathia may shoot her Ministers and Generals or her Bankers and Editors if she finds them a nuisance . . . by the dozen . . . and welcome! It's a method of government like any other . . . and there's a lot to be said for it. But we can't have your throat cut. There may not be much belief left in kings nowadays . . . but there's still a lot of sentiment about them . . . pleasant, wholesome sentiment. We don't want that churned up into passion . . . and other passions churned up to clash with it. We can't afford to have this affair of yours turn tragedy. Europe's nerves are n't braced to it for the moment. You'll be ready to leave, please, to-morrow.

*The KING gives a bitter little shrug.*

THE KING. Lock the doors. Start the train. What can I do?

SIR CHARLES. We kept our fingers out of the pie as long as we could. I don't say we'd not have welcomed your success. But what less could you expect us to welcome?

THE KING. However I'd come by it? Whatever I'd done with it?

SIR CHARLES. This mess won't clear up yet awhile . . . and you're well out of it, Sir, believe me.

*The KING seems to speak from afar away.*

THE KING. There are two ways of looking at this world, are n't there? As a chaos that you fish in for your profit . . . you can always pull something up. Then there's the world of your idea . . . and some of us would sooner go on to the end, hoping that may come true. Have you ever been possessed by an idea, Sir Charles?

*SIR CHARLES can afford now to return to the amenities of conversation, and most readily he does.*

SIR CHARLES. In my youth I believed I was a poet.

THE KING. And were you?

SIR CHARLES. My friends thought the evidence insufficient.

THE KING. They may have been wrong.

SIR CHARLES. I still feel sometimes that they were.

THE KING. And the further the reality slips from you . . . the better you know the idea was true. I came back set not to fight . . . and with nothing I wanted to win. But I did come to think for a little that there was something for me to do here. I shall never do it. Who wants it done? Yet I've never felt so much a king as I do now. As a poet . . . you'll understand that. I'll walk to the gate with you . . . I'm glad of the exercise. If I'd still faith enough in my idea . . . would the barbed wire be down when we reached it?

*But SIR CHARLES cannot let these pretty metaphysics fog the business that's in hand.*

SIR CHARLES. What's your answer to Madrassy, Sir?

THE KING. Poor Madrassy! Finessing for my skin all the week with Bruckner and his catastrophic friends! And now that your Firefly's over the horizon . . . here's his reward. (*Once more he twirls that official envelope.*) He's to flourish it signed and sealed in their faces to-morrow. A respectable Republic in being! Stocks and shares mounting again! And their only excuse for letting hell loose spirited away! Yes . . . I think you'll have dished the new revolutionaries very nicely, between you.

SIR CHARLES. Your Majesty has it pat.

*He says this with genuine admiration; the KING would be a master at the game, that's clear. They have all risen.*

*SIR CHARLES is moving towards the door, when suddenly, with a side glance at the QUEEN . . .*

THE KING. Shall I sign now, Rosamund . . . or wait till to-morrow?

*She does not look at him.*



THE QUEEN. Why ask me?

*To this, very noticeably, he does not reply.*

THE KING. Have we made the best bargain we can? Once I started bargaining I'd be a very Jew. Can't I have my mutineers amnestied . . . Czernyak and all?

SIR CHARLES. He'd let off the lot if he dared, Sir. But Bruckner's nominee took over Horvath's command this morning.

*The KING watches the QUEEN still. She makes no move.*

THE KING. It's a close game.

*Suddenly she turns, to ask lightly . . .*

THE QUEEN. Sir Charles . . . will you take a note for me to Karlsburg? And could Dominica come out to see her mother, Henry?

THE KING. [*Interpreting.*] Countess Czernyak.

SIR CHARLES. I'm sure she can.

THE QUEEN. I'll fetch it.

*She goes out, with unexpected swiftness. They begin the casual talk of men kept waiting.*

THE KING. How's Captain Dod, by the way?

SIR CHARLES. In hospital . . . and I mean to keep him there. They'll save his arm . . . but it's badly poisoned.

THE KING. I'm sorry . . . I'm glad! [*His mind does not seem to be on the subject.*] And what happened at the funeral, Guastalla?

GUASTALLA. I walked behind the bier. Your Majesty's wreath was a very pretty one.

THE KING. In the country here, did you know, a child's body's carried by children. There's no coffin . . . they cover it with flowers.

SIR CHARLES. I did n't know, Sir.

THE KING. This happened the day of the mutiny . . . our one casualty, I'd hoped! Her father kept the tollgate. She used to sit on his shoulder to take the pennies. When she heard the firing she ran out to see the soldiers . . .

*He stops. He pretends to no sentimental grief. But still . . . !* SIR CHARLES *is tactful.*

SIR CHARLES. No one holds your Majesty responsible for that sorry affair.

THE KING. That is sound constitutional doctrine, I know. Karlsburg's cursing me pretty roundly, I suppose, though. Martial law?

SIR CHARLES. No . . . everyone's enjoying the crisis, I think. Spending money! Why not . . . when it may be worthless to-morrow? The opera's crowded. I dropped in last night . . . to show I'd nothing on my mind.

THE KING. What were they giving?

SIR CHARLES. Tosca.

THE KING. Terrible stuff. Cats on the tiles! What's this new woman like?

SIR CHARLES. She can do everything but sing. Mozart would put her in her place. No . . . Madrassy has been very sensible. Even the Stock Exchange panic has gone on long enough now for as many people to be doing well out of it as badly. And the knowing ones must have done very well indeed.

THE KING. Will my backers in Paris go bankrupt?

SIR CHARLES. Not, Sir, if for this last week they've been backing you to lose . . . as I should suppose they have.

THE KING. I hope they have.

*The QUEEN returns with the letter.*

THE QUEEN. Here it is. Thank you.

SIR CHARLES. I'll seal it.

THE QUEEN. No need. It's to ask her to bring me some stockings.

SIR CHARLES. To-morrow, Ma'am.

*He turns towards the door again, the KING with him.*

THE KING. Suppose you do find Czernyak in Karlsburg? Garibaldi worked just such a miracle . . . and gave a nation faith in itself for fifty years.

SIR CHARLES. Then Madrassy would need no answer, Sir.

THE KING. But Carpathia would be asking for another sort of king. We'd like news of the children . . .

*They all go out together. Left alone, her Majesty and GUASTALLA turn to each other, like conspirators, glad of each other's support but none too pleased that they need it, nor with each other.*

THE QUEEN. Why did he make me listen? I could n't bear it another minute. How much does he know?

GUASTALLA. You've not told me yet now much you've told him, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. If he guesses why does n't he say so! He has hardly spoken to me these three days.

GUASTALLA. I've a message from Czernyak. It was in the flowers. I've burnt it.

THE QUEEN. Were n't they sent to me?

*She puts them aside a moment later, as if they had won a little gentleness from her on false pretences.*

GUASTALLA. He's in touch with Bruckner.

THE QUEEN. Did he get the money?

GUASTALLA. I suppose so.

THE QUEEN. I'm beginning not to care.

GUASTALLA. Will you please warn me, Ma'am, when you mean to tell his Majesty?

THE QUEEN. Why?

GUASTALLA. I'll ask for my dismissal. I won't wait for it.

THE QUEEN. Why should he dismiss you?

GUASTALLA. I'm deceiving him, Ma'am.

*The QUEEN looks him up and down.*

THE QUEEN. If I can deceive him . . . surely you can.

GUASTALLA. There's a difference.

*Her Majesty grows colder still.*

THE QUEEN. You should not be doing what you think it wrong to do, Colonel Guastalla.

GUASTALLA. I am glad to be of service . . . to your Majesty.

*As she looks at him standing there, his eyes averted, most*

*shocking thoughts surge in her mind, recollections of the KING'S mild chaff about his adoring her. Surely he cannot imagine that . . . !*

THE QUEEN. You will please not think of it in that way.

GUASTALLA. Very well, Ma'am. Was that letter about stockings?

*As a fellow-conspirator he has every right to know. But he is frozen with a . . .*

THE QUEEN. You heard me say so. You should not ask such a question.

*And, to their mutual relief, the conspirators part. She leaves him standing there.*

*. . . The carriage is empty. The window-blinds are drawn, and the grey light of morning filters through them.*

*ELLA, the maid, bustles in and begins snapping them up in great haste. COUNTESS CZERNYAK follows her, hastily too.*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Who is it, Ella?

ELLA. I don't know, my lady.

*By the other door in comes COLONEL HADIK.*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Who is it, Basil?

HADIK. Bruckner.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. At this hour! They're not out of bed.

*By the doorway from which COUNTESS CZERNYAK came comes COLONEL GUASTALLA.*

HADIK. Mr. Bruckner to see his Majesty.

GUASTALLA. I know. I've told him.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. He must wait.

GUASTALLA. He's to come in.

*At which moment MR. BRUCKNER, who has not waited, even for this, does come in. He stands there, glum and bodeful. After a moment COUNTESS CZERNYAK says . . .*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Run along now, Ella. You can tidy later.

*ELLA runs along. COUNTESS CZERNYAK follows her.*

BRUCKNER. Was that Countess Czernyak?

GUASTALLA. Yes.

BRUCKNER. I thought so.

*The KING enters, shaved and spruce, but still in his dressing-gown. He greets his visitor with very cool politeness.*

THE KING. Good morning, Mr. Bruckner. Your business is pressing?

BRUCKNER. Can I speak to your Majesty alone?

THE KING. Certainly. Will you have some coffee?

BRUCKNER. No, thank you.

THE KING. Please do. Then I can finish mine with a better grace.

BRUCKNER. Very well.

THE KING. Let Ella bring it in, please, Colonel Hadik. Get your own, Guastalla. It's a headache for me if I start work first.

*COLONEL HADIK has left the room. GUASTALLA follows him. But MR. BRUCKNER is not to be disconcerted by these civilities. He is of very set purpose indeed. So the KING, still studying him, changes tactics with a more familiar . . .*

THE KING. Out with it!

*MR. BRUCKNER comes out with it; purpose in every word.*

BRUCKNER. If you'll do as I tell you I'll have you in Karlsruhe within the week.

*The KING duly digests every word; then queries with the politest irony . . .*

THE KING. In my coffin?

BRUCKNER. As king. On your white horse . . . with your crown on . . . in a week or two!

THE KING. Really! This is a familiar promise. Count Czernyak made it me last. I'll own I did n't think I'd next hear it from you.

BRUCKNER. Czernyak's dead.

*Then something has happened at last. The KING shows neither surprise nor grief, but brings all his wits to bear.*

THE KING. Killed?

BRUCKNER. Yes.

THE KING. When?

BRUCKNER. About two o'clock this morning. He'd been with me till past one. I had him brought back to my quarters. Here's all I found in the pockets.

*He takes from his own pocket a carefully wrapped up little packet.*

THE KING. Who killed him?

*Before BRUCKNER can answer COLONEL HADIK comes in with the tray of coffee, which he puts down upon a convenient table.*

HADIK. If your Majesty will forgive me . . . Ella is not yet properly dressed.

*He departs; the perfect butler! BRUCKNER put out by the interruption, says rather sourly . . .*

BRUCKNER. Does he like carrying trays?

THE KING. I daresay.

*He says it with the ghost of a smile; but his eyes are sternly questioning still, and it is to them MR. BRUCKNER half replies with . . .*

BRUCKNER. He came in to make terms.

THE KING. Not with my knowledge.

BRUCKNER. Granted.

THE KING. And rashly . . . it seems!

BRUCKNER. D' you think I had him killed?

THE KING. Did you come to terms?

BRUCKNER. I thought his offer too good to be true.

THE KING. As yours, Mr. Bruckner, seems to me.

BRUCKNER. You've come pretty near beating us, though. D' you know how near?

THE KING. I think I know.

*This may have a meaning for him, which escapes MR.*

*BRUCKNER.*

BRUCKNER. I've been wondering all this week if the very

legend of you locked up here might n't beat us! Why did n't Madrassy make terms with you? He has missed his chance. Czernyak has missed his . . . once and for all. I see mine now. That's frank.

THE KING. Admirably!

*The KING hands him his coffee; he is surprised to find how glad he is of it.*

BRUCKNER. You'll have to trust me a bit. But if I fail I'm done for.

THE KING. That's a fair pledge. But what use can I be to you?

BRUCKNER. The two of us can stop things here stampeding to perdition. If we don't . . . and pretty quickly . . . I don't know what else can.

THE KING. We make . . . politically . . . an odd pair, Mr. Bruckner.

BRUCKNER. Does that matter?

*To which the KING makes frank and respectful response.*

THE KING. No. But I thought things were going so well with you.

BRUCKNER. Yes . . . I've the troops in hand . . . I can wipe out these men Czernyak has left stranded. I've purged my own party and I can turn out Madrassy if I want to. Yes . . . everything's going well with me, thank you! But where am I going? When I'm where I want to be . . . what next? That's the one question most men won't ask in time, is n't it? What has brought me here? I'll tell you. Count Czernyak was n't over civil . . . he meant me no good . . . I don't blame him. He did n't like talking terms . . . but he knew I meant fighting . . . so his game was up . . . though he'd have had a last fling at me, I suppose, with any men that would have followed him. I sent two young hopefuls of mine to see him through the lines. They picked a quarrel with him and shot him. I was planning to-day's work with the Staff when the news came back. It took me ten minutes to find out I dare n't



punish them for it. Dare n't! I've not pushed my way and other men out of it without knowing what that means! I lay down an hour to think things over . . . then I started here to you. I won't be hustled to the devil if I can help it. Can we shake free and make a fresh start and do the sensible thing between us? That's the question. I must be back by mid-day to carry on.

*All this gulping his coffee. Now he puts the cup down, and waits response. What the KING is thinking of it all who can say? Not MR. BRUCKNER, for the moment.*

THE KING. Have you a practical plan?

BRUCKNER. I think so. I'll bring you to Karlsburg. There's clamour enough to put you on trial and make a martyr of you. I shall let things go hang for a week till everyone's pretty frightened . . . for that'd mean stiff reprisals. Then I'll march in the troops for a day's shooting. Then I'll risk it . . . I'll proclaim you. And you'll proclaim peace and the union of parties and the rest. Your own manifesto! That Englishman dropped twenty on my head one day.

THE KING. And what next?

BRUCKNER. We'll work a plebiscite to take the wind from Madrassy's sails. Then we must govern and stand no nonsense.

THE KING. That will be for you to do.

BRUCKNER. Yes. By what right? Because I can. If I can't . . . I'll take the consequences.

THE KING. I should find myself sharing those with you, at least. Who is to support us?

BRUCKNER. The men that are sick of this never-ending muddle called politics.

THE KING. Quite a large following!

BRUCKNER. . . . that'll do a hand's turn or so to put an end to it.

THE KING. Ah . . . not quite so large!

BRUCKNER. . . . if we make it worth their while. Not with money. Stuff men with money when they're no more

use. I want young men . . . kept on the stretch. Bully them a bit . . . and let them do a bit of bullying.

THE KING. Your two young murderers may still be useful.

BRUCKNER. I'll bring them to book for you . . . once things are safe.

THE KING. Would that be quite fair? Yes . . . it all sounds most practical.

*MR. BRUCKNER is not over-susceptible to irony; but he becomes conscious of the fact that he has, at least, not stirred his Majesty to any enthusiasm. His brows twist into a frown and he begins to undo the little packet of the things found in CZERNYAK'S pockets.*

BRUCKNER. I'll hand you these, I think.

*As he bends over, loosening the string, the KING studies him curiously.*

THE KING. Did we ever meet in the old days, Mr. Bruckner.

BRUCKNER. Remember the top of my head, do you? I was boot-black at the Vigado Club when you were Crown Prince and used to come there. I've blacked your boots many a time.

*For the first time the KING feels a little drawn towards him.*

THE KING. So you were! You were famous as a boot-black. And always reading!

BRUCKNER. It was dull between times.

THE KING. I used to bring you books. You kept a little stack of them under the duster in the corner. Did n't you go up to some university later? We all subscribed.

BRUCKNER. Yes . . . and a bit later, when the war came, to prison. And when peace came . . . into exile.

THE KING. Were we fellow-exiles?

BRUCKNER. I came back when you left.

THE KING. What did you go to prison for?

BRUCKNER. Optimism. Belief in the millennium . . . in the brotherhood of man and the rest of it. I'm quite cured.

*He has the contents of the parcel spread out now: a paper or so, two bundles of banknotes, and a little something twisted up in tissue paper.*

Czernyak tried to bribe me with silly promises. But here's his list . . . and a pretty full one . . . of my underlings. These (*the banknotes*), I dare say, were for paying a couple of them to cut my throat. And these, I think, are her Majesty's.

*The tissue paper, untwisted, shows the QUEEN'S pearls. Were it a mislaid umbrella brought back, his Majesty could not say more casually . . .*

THE KING. I believe so.

BRUCKNER. The letter she wrote sending them . . . is n't a very discreet letter.

*He hands it to the KING, who glances it over.*

THE KING. Not very.

BRUCKNER. No one else has read it . . . as far as I know.

*The KING hands it back.*

THE KING. Thank you. I doubt if I can pay your price for it.

BRUCKNER. Take it! Take the lot! I'm not driving a bargain. I want no hold on you. I'll take these if you like and write a receipt for them. Then you'll have bought me and paid for me.

*He swings the pearls in his hand.*

THE KING. That would give you a very tight hold on me.

*These finessing scruples are more than MR. BRUCKNER can bear.*

BRUCKNER. What is it you want, then? Here's all you've been asking for . . . if you'll trust me to give it you. You would n't think the better of me if I'd come to you talking loyalty and patriotism.

THE KING. The worse!

BRUCKNER. I'm not gentleman enough? It can't be that . . . in these days.

THE KING. No. You are a man of some talent, Mr. Bruck-

ner . . . and I, at least, am a king. We can both afford not to be snobs.

BRUCKNER. If you 'd brought back your old gang . . . if you took on Madrassy's nondescripts . . . how long would that last? There's more to be done now, I tell you, than look wise and say smooth things while the old machine clanks round. There's one way to govern a country . . . just one. Find where its real power is . . . and give that play. It's in me for the moment . . . and the men of my mind. When I've done all I can . . . when I lose grip . . . the next good man may scrap me. I give him leave.

THE KING. But what is your need of me?

*What can MR. BRUCKNER do but answer such a candid question?*

BRUCKNER. I should n't count myself clever if it were n't for the fools around . . . but I do try to see things as they are and not as I'd fancy them. Once I get to work . . . I shan't be very popular.

THE KING. Oh . . . why not?

BRUCKNER. With the middle-class mob that never wakes up to anything till the virtue's going out of it? But keep the shops open and the trains running on time . . . and they'll think all's well with the world! Not with your friends. Not with my horny-handed kith and kin, I promise you! For we've to get this country to work again . . . and to fight again, maybe. Men are children, mostly, and . . . give them a chance . . . wicked children . . . and as lazy as they're let be. Put tools and guns in their hands . . . you must! But take care the ideas in their heads are n't dangerous toys to play with.

THE KING. The sight of me with a crown on occasionally would keep them amused, you think.

BRUCKNER. It all counts. You're impressing me now, you know . . . even in your dressing-gown.

*At this his Majesty laughs outright.*

THE KING. I 'm so glad.

BRUCKNER. But there 's more to you than that. You like people . . . I can't . . . ! and they like you. That counts. They believe in you. And that counts . . . does n't it?

*The KING weighs this in his mind for a moment.  
Then . . .*

THE KING. Mr. Bruckner . . . when you sent your two young friends off with Count Czernyak did you think . . . or did n't you . . . they might murder him? Will you answer me that?

MR. BRUCKNER *wonders if he shall, then decides that he will.*

BRUCKNER. Yes . . . I did.

THE KING. Thank you.

*He is sitting at his table. He rings a little bell on it. Then he takes from a despatch case that long official envelope we have already seen, and from it the document.*

BRUCKNER. Is that what 's troubling you? He 's as well out of the way. He 'd done his best for you. What more was he doing but mischief . . . flinging his men to their death?

THE KING. And he might have beaten you.

BRUCKNER. Yes . . . and then where should I have been? I 'm sorry. But half measures were no use with him. It was the best thing to do . . . and the best way to do it.

COLONEL GUASTALLA *comes in. The KING is now signing the document.*

THE KING. Will you witness this please, Guastalla? It 's my abdication.

MR. BRUCKNER — *though he was beginning to expect this — is at loss for a juster comment than . . .*

BRUCKNER. That 's useful!

*But indeed, what comment could be juster? The KING yields his place to GUASTALLA, who sits and signs. He turns to MR. BRUCKNER again.*

THE KING. I shall watch your career with interest, Mr. Bruckner. This body politic 's corrupt enough, perhaps, to

need your medicine. When you 're cured of your modesty . . . , I think you may be very popular indeed. But you 'll do well enough without me for a puppet. And I shall find poultry-farming pleasanter . . . and far more dignified. How much belief in me was to be left when we 'd shaken hands over Czernyak's dead body? Enough for your purpose! I could serve that well enough, no doubt . . . as the dumb sign of a faith made tame and ridiculous . . . its loyalties turned to the breeding of snobs. No, I 'll betray my cause in my own way.

*GUASTALLA is at his side with the document of abdication.*

*He takes it and hands it to MR. BRUCKNER.*

Will you give this to Madrassy? He 's still your chief, is n't he? But you 'll be fighting him in the open soon.

BRUCKNER. I hope so.

THE KING. You may beat him. With the best intentions he betrays his beliefs. But the belief that has been betrayed may then beat you. I 'll give it a chance to. Czernyak has been killed, Guastalla.

GUASTALLA. Yes, Sir.

BRUCKNER. I trust the news won't upset her Majesty very much.

*The KING is surprised — though really he should not be — at this little touch of common humanity.*

THE KING. Thank you.

*MR. BRUCKNER weighs the abdication in his hand.*

BRUCKNER. You 've missed your chance.

THE KING. Do you think so? I could hardly tell you, Mr. Bruckner, how fantastically unreal all you 've been saying has seemed to me. If ill-luck ever sends you abroad again . . . look me up. I 'd much like to know if it does n't come to seem so to you. Good-bye.

BRUCKNER. I wish your Majesty a pleasant journey.

*As MR. BRUCKNER nears the door which GUASTALLA is holding open for him, the KING, turning to the table where the débris from CZERNYAK'S pockets is still lying, asks . . .*



THE KING. You're sure you've no use for these . . . spoils of war?

BRUCKNER. None.

*And so, with some dignity, he departs, GUASTALLA following him. The KING goes to the other door and calls . . .*

THE KING. Rosamund.

*When the QUEEN comes in he is standing again by the table.*

These are yours, I think. I should burn the letter. Stephen Czernyak has been killed.

THE QUEEN. Fighting?

THE KING. No. Did you send him the money as well?

THE QUEEN. All I had.

THE KING. He went in with it to bargain and they shot him in cold blood. You're not to blame for that.

THE QUEEN. I'll take the blame. I'm very sorry.

THE KING. Shall I tell his mother . . . or will you?

THE QUEEN. I must.

*The QUEEN has the necklace in her hand and the letter.*

*The KING, half-automatically, has opened one of the packets of notes.*

THE KING. But what was he to do with these?

THE QUEEN. Bribe people.

*He gives an exasperated sigh.*

THE KING. How many more times am I to tell you that this old note with my head on it is worthless?

THE QUEEN. Not if we'd won! And if the people he bribed cheated us and we did n't . . . I wanted them to be cheated too. Don't always think me a fool, Henry.

*At this moment — fortunately perhaps — GUASTALLA reappears; and the QUEEN before she turns to go (she is glad to go) says . . .*

Colonel Guastalla has been in no way to blame.

*And she leaves them. The KING is a little brusque with GUASTALLA, who is evidently preparing, metaphorically, to surrender his sword.*



THE KING. Now, Guastalla . . . don't apologise. I knew you were up to something. You can't keep a secret to save your life. And don't try and resign. That does no good. We must clear up these papers. They may pack us off at any moment now.

*So they set to work . . .*

*. . . It is dark, and the oil lamps of the parson, already lighted, flare through the windows. Near one of them stands the QUEEN, tense and sad. She is getting on, but she has just turned away from DOMINICA CERNYAK, who, by the door, and in some distress, drops a deprecating remark.*

DOMINICA. Then may I please take my leave of your Majesty?

*The QUEEN turns back, remorse quenching anger.*

THE QUEEN. No . . . don't go like that, child. I didn't mean to hurt you. But if your mind's made up . . . why ask me to approve . . . when you must know I don't? Don't stand there tongue-tied as if you were afraid of me. I've had you about me since you were a baby. There's nothing to make me very terrifying now!

DOMINICA. I've never been afraid of your Majesty. But of course I don't talk to you as I would to anyone else.

*She does not mean her conduct to be so deep. But it does, though a while ago her Majesty might have thought this was just as it should be.*

THE QUEEN. I see. Well . . . your mother thinks it her duty to go with us . . . and you don't think it your duty to be with her.

DOMINICA. She does n't think it, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. She thinks you'd better stay, perhaps, and keep a few friends here. Then here's a retreat for her. And if I approve . . . then our friends can't blame you. Yes . . . a very good plan! Why do you humiliate me by making me say bitter things to you?

*Under the sudden storm of anger and pride and pain with which this ends poor DOMINICA, who is, after all, very young, bursts into tears.*

DOMINICA. I did n't mean to . . . I did n't! I'm so sorry for your Majesty . . . but I thought it would make you angry if I said so. And Mamma's going with you because she loves you . . . more than anyone in the world except Stephen and me. And Stephen's dead!

*The QUEEN, remorseful again, even, perhaps, shamed a little, sinks into a chair.*

THE QUEEN. Come and sit by me a minute. Forgive me. Stephen's death has been a great shock . . . to the King . . . and to me. I've been trying all day to break it to your mother. I never thought I could be such a coward. I'll tell her now . . . before you go. Or will you tell her?

DOMINICA. But she knows, Ma'am. She has known since this morning.

THE QUEEN. Are you sure?

DOMINICA. She said when she kissed me: You've heard Stephen's dead. I said: Yes. There was n't time for more. She had to announce me to you.

THE QUEEN. She has been with me all day. I ought to have known she knew!

DOMINICA. I think she'd rather not talk about it . . . if you don't mind, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. He died for his country . . . and for us . . . just as truly as if he'd died fighting. You can always remember that. See that Masses are said for him. Your mother's so busy packing she may n't think of it. I'll send you the money.

*Then with simple affection for the girl she adds . . .*

But come with us . . . won't you? There's still time.

*DOMINICA shakes her head.*

DOMINICA. No, Ma'am . . . I can't.

THE QUEEN. You're behaving very foolishly. You don't

know what may happen here. We 're leaving the country to its fate . . . and it deserves no better . . . to Socialism . . . and Communism . . . or even worse. You may find yourself a waitress in a tea-shop . . . or anything. What good can you do by staying?

DOMINICA. The worse things were, I think, the more I should have to stay.

THE QUEEN. Dominica . . . you 're not in love with anyone undesirable, are you?

DOMINICA. No, Ma'am, not with anyone at all. But . . .

THE QUEEN. Well? Tell me the truth.

DOMINICA *tells it.*

DOMINICA. It 's my country, you see.

*The QUEEN has no more to say. COLONEL HADIK appears.*

*He carries some bundles of newspapers.*

THE QUEEN. What are those, Colonel?

HADIK. The newspapers his Majesty asked for. Sir Charles Cruwys has just come. He brought them in his car. He will wait upon your Majesty whenever it is convenient. The engine is now being attached. But there may be a little delay . . . for something, it seems, is broken. And his Majesty asks you to allow Jakab to take leave of you also.

THE QUEEN. Who? I remember. Yes.

HADIK. The farmer. And could your Majesty perhaps find a good-bye present for him?

THE QUEEN. I 'll try.

*COUNT HADIK goes out again. He is a little excited and upset by the bustle of departure, a little shaky.*

THE QUEEN. What 's to become of him?

DOMINICA. He 'll go back, Ma'am, to his garden and his gun . . . and do his sums. He was quite happy.

*The QUEEN sighs rather enviously.*

THE QUEEN. Once you 're old, nothing matters much. You 've (*She pats the girl's hand*) all sorts of things to hope for. I'm not afraid for you, my dear. You 're good. Yes . . .

be gallant . . . be gay! And never let anyone pity you. Pray for us sometimes, won't you? We shall be so far away. Give me a kiss. Go to your mother now. Stay with her till we start.

*She looks up to see JAKAB standing in the doorway. He is an old farmer; of the earth earthy, and it is hard caked earth at that. He is in his working clothes, for it is a week-day; but they have been brushed to rights very strenuously by somebody. DOMINICA has obediently risen, dropped her curtsey and gone. What the QUEEN is to do with the mute old man, who stands rigidly staring at her from the doorway, she cannot think. She is nearing the end of her resources of tact. At last she says helplessly . . .*

THE QUEEN. Good-bye.

*Then the image finds a slow tongue.*

JAKAB. This is your Majesty?

THE QUEEN. Yes.

JAKAB. Happy to have a look at your Majesty . . . as my wife . . . and his Majesty . . . said I ought . . . it being the last chance there 'll be. And his Majesty 's been a lot about the farm . . . very friendly.

*This gives the QUEEN her cue.*

THE QUEEN. Thank you for the butter and the eggs . . . such good eggs . . . and the milk you 've sent us.

JAKAB. [*Encouragingly.*] They 've been paid for . . . I 'll say that.

*The KING comes in. He is brisk and lively. The one great change in him is that he no longer wears his uniform. He had instead to send into Zimony for a reach-me-down, and, frankly, the cut and the pattern of Zimony clothes leave a little to be desired. But he carries them with ease and dignity. He could be dignified and easy in a bathing-dress, it seems.*

THE KING. Just seen Sir Charles! Bermuda 's where they 're sending us. And our Naval escort 's parading on the

platform. He wants me to inspect it. Very civil of him!

THE QUEEN. Henry! You can't!

THE KING. Why not?

THE QUEEN. Dressed like that!

*The horrors of war pale before the scene she imagines.*

THE KING. Oh, nonsense! Good-bye, Jakab. Six months here with you . . . and I'd know something of farming. He tells me I've an eye for a calf. Poultry I'm not to be flattered about . . . but who'd have thought I'd an eye for a calf.

*The KING's good spirits and the familiar topic bring the old farmer to life a little, and he winks portentously at the QUEEN.*

JAKAB. I said it to please him. But you've not a bad eye for a calf.

THE KING. And he's going to keep Snowjacket.

*COUNTESS CZERNYAK has come in and is waiting in silence.*

*The QUEEN turns to her with an affection that she tries to keep from seeming remorseful.*

THE QUEEN. Yes . . . dear Ja-ja?

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. We're starting at once, Ma'am. Your hat-box has n't come from the town. Shall I ask if we may send for it?

THE QUEEN. No . . . we'll manage.

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. Very well, Ma'am.

*Her face calm and unchanging, she goes. The QUEEN says swiftly to the KING . . .*

THE QUEEN. Henry . . . she knows.

*He is amazed; rather shocked.*

THE KING. Who told her?

THE QUEEN. I can't think. Say nothing to her to-night.

THE KING. Very well.

*JAKAB has been waiting to pursue the only subject that interests him; but he never cares how long he waits.*

JAKAB. Not that he'll earn his keep!

*The KING is jovial but firm.*

THE KING. Now . . . not one penny do you bluff out of me by that tale!

JAKAB. He 's no use for ploughing. He 'll go in the small muck-waggon. But how often do I have it out?

THE KING. You 'll ride him to market every Friday.

JAKAB. I won't. My son 's got a motor car.

THE QUEEN. Snowjacket should be shot, Henry.

*But this JAKAB takes very badly.*

JAKAB. Oh . . . I 'll shoot him . . . and thank you! He 'd fetch a bit as horseflesh.

COLONEL GUASTALLA *comes swiftly in with* . . .

GUASTALLA. The escort 's paraded, Sir.

THE KING. Jakab, don't be surly. Very well . . . I 'll come.

JAKAB. Surly!

*The QUEEN makes a last, almost tearful appeal.*

THE QUEEN. Henry . . . won't you . . . please . . .?

THE KING. What, my dear?

THE QUEEN. Put on your uniform?

JAKAB. Me surly!

THE KING. Certainly not. I 've abdicated. It would be most improper.

JAKAB. And well I might be surly with all these carryings on! My barns made barracks of! Sentries and pickets . . .!

THE KING. You 've coined money out of us.

JAKAB. But you 're going now.

THE KING. You farmers talked as if you were the only people on earth that mattered.

JAKAB. So we are. Governments! I 've seen 'em come and I 've seen 'em go. Red . . . white . . . all colours! There 's nothing I ask of 'em but to let me alone. Politics! My son 's for politics . . . my wife 'd be if she got about. He sneaks into Zimony to see your Majesties. Your Majesty gives him a pretty smile . . . well, he thought so! . . . so he 's for politics. God help the land when I 'm gone! Will politics

grow corn . . . or raise beef? Jacks-in-offices come round badgering me! Will I plant this . . . will I sow that? Why won't I pay taxes? I won't pay no taxes. I'll feed you or starve you . . . take your choice . . . according as you worrit me or let me alone. But no politics! My work's cut out watching the weather. That's chancy enough for me.

*He now finds that the KING has missed the greater part of this discourse, having gone to inspect the parade. He wags a head at the door.*

Is he coming back?

GUASTALLA. Not till we start, probably.

JAKAB. Oh!

*Even GUASTALLA'S tact seems exhausted; the QUEEN'S endurance is ebbing, and there JAKAB still stands. At last she says, helplessly . . .*

THE QUEEN. Guastalla . . . I've nothing to give him.

JAKAB. Yes . . . I did understand there was something might be given me.

THE QUEEN. I'm sorry.

JAKAB. I'd thought of an order.

*Her Majesty's mind weakens.*

THE QUEEN. But what more can we order?

JAKAB. To wear. Lots used to have 'em. And his Majesty being so friendly . . . my wife says: You ask for an order.

*She can bear no more.*

THE QUEEN. Please go away.

*JAKAB turns on her grimly, yet with no intended unkindness.*

JAKAB. It's not me that's going away.

*GUASTALLA comes to the rescue.*

GUASTALLA. His Majesty has abdicated, Mr. Jakab . . . and cannot confer decorations. They would not be valid.

JAKAB. When did he?

GUASTALLA. This morning.

JAKAB. Oh! I ought to have asked sooner . . . when



my wife told me. Well . . . I wish your Majesty a good journey.

*He makes a rough bow and is going. But the QUEEN rallies. Life shall not outmock her. She goes to her little table, finds there a small morocco case, opens it and presents it to him, saying . . .*

THE QUEEN. Mr. Jakab! Yesterday you would have been a Knight of St. Andrew.

JAKAB *is delighted.*

JAKAB. Now that's most ladylike of your Majesty . . . and I'm much obliged . . . and so 'll my wife be. Of course if it's not valid it don't do you any good. But you mean it kindly. Much obliged to your Majesty, I'm sure.

*GUASTALLA manœuvres him out; for the QUEEN is near a breakdown, might break down now did not COUNTESS CZERNYAK return. A little courage is due to her.*

THE QUEEN. Yes . . . dear Ja-ja?

*Before an answer can be given JAKAB and GUASTALLA are back again. This is unendurable.*

GUASTALLA. Forgive me, Ma'am . . . the inspection . . . I forgot! May we go the other way?

JAKAB. Cold weather for the time of year! And your Majesty feels it . . . boxed up like this. To be sure you must!

*They are gone again — thank God! — by the other door.*

COUNTESS CZERNYAK. The hat-box has come, Ma'am. I've not money enough to pay for it, I'm afraid.

THE QUEEN. I've none. Ask Guastalla.

*COUNTESS CZERNYAK hurries after him. And now the QUEEN does utterly and irretrievably break down, collapses, shaken with weeping, into the nearest chair, where, unluckily, SIR CHARLES CRUWYS finds her. She looks up to discover him standing there.*

SIR CHARLES. I most humbly beg your pardon, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. It's the first time . . . it is indeed! I've

stood up to the worst. But little things happen you 're not ready for . . . silly things. Did they laugh?

SIR CHARLES *is puzzled.*

SIR CHARLES. Who, Ma'am?

THE QUEEN. The escort. He should n't have inspected them in that suit, should he? It does n't fit him . . . it was ready-made. They did n't laugh?

SIR CHARLES. No, indeed!

THE QUEEN. Sailors are so kind.

SIR CHARLES. He 's talking to my French and Italian colleagues. I 've left them to have their say . . . there 's been a little feeling! I ought to have given them more of a show. I brought you these, Ma'am.

*He hands her a few letters.*

THE QUEEN. From the children? Oh . . . thank you!

SIR CHARLES. They 're to join you at Toulon . . . with both governesses and the head-nurse. It 's the shortest train journey.

THE QUEEN. Where is Bermuda?

SIR CHARLES. It 's an island . . . a small island . . . near America. An excellent climate. No mosquitoes.

THE QUEEN. I 've never been across the sea . . . not even to England. We don't travel like other people, you know . . . and I was married so young. It 's a very small island, I expect. Do sit down, Sir Charles . . . please. One of my bad dreams when I was a child was that I was left on a piece of land no bigger than a dinner plate . . . for the lesson-books never said it need be any bigger . . . surrounded entirely by sea. And I 'd wake up screaming.

*She has dried her tears; but, they being dry, pain and anger flush through her again.*

Oh this wicked country! Thank God it 's not mine . . . not really mine! Better have none! But why do they let us go . . . why have n't they killed us? I want to stop hating them . . . it poisons you to have to sit still and hate people.

*And again pain and anger have exhausted her.*

We've been putting petrol on the ponds here because of the mosquitoes. They don't all give you malaria . . . you tell them by their legs. I can't die fighting . . . but they could have found some way to kill me. Tell me more about Bermuda.

SIR CHARLES *is about to, when the KING enters, alert and cheerful.*

THE KING. Honoured, my dear Sir Charles, by such an escort. A very smart body of men! A little pale, some of them. These modern ships do coop them up. What's that young officer's name again?

SIR CHARLES. Anstruther.

THE KING. Say it once more.

SIR CHARLES. Anstruther.

THE KING. Thank you . . . I shall remember it now. He knows Bermuda, Rosamund. Charming place! Houses built of coral. Not much rain. American tourists. British Atlantic Fleet. No mosquitoes to speak of.

SIR CHARLES. I must bid your Majesties good-bye.

*The KING shakes hands warmly.*

THE KING. You've been most kind!

THE QUEEN. Most kind!

THE KING. Next year . . . if we've behaved ourselves . . . you might let us run over to America for a week or so.

SIR CHARLES. It's possible, Sir.

THE KING. Incognito.

SIR CHARLES. That would not be so easy.

THE KING. I've to think of the future. We've seven children to marry. And I expect I'm a pauper.

THE QUEEN. Henry . . . don't joke about such things.

THE KING. I'm serious. Europe must face democracy . . . and America's problem is to leaven the social lump.

SIR CHARLES. Our policy, Sir, has long been to bring in the New World to redress the bank-balances of the Old. The War brought the process to some confusion.

THE KING. And we may yet see the South American states weary of revolution and dictatorship and demand constitutional kings. Good-bye.

SIR CHARLES. But there 's to be no confiscating your private funds.

THE KING. The farm at Zurich will take some winding up. I put a pile of money into it. What about Bermuda for poultry now?

*Can the QUEEN bear it one moment more?*

THE QUEEN. Why don't we start? Why don't we go?

SIR CHARLES. They 're waiting, I fear, for me to get out. Something comes from Bermuda. Potatoes! I 'll ask about poultry. We shall be in touch with you till you leave Toulon. Your Majesty.

*He bows to the QUEEN who gives him her hand to kiss.*

THE KING. Good-bye, again.

*He gives SIR CHARLES's hand another cordial shake.*

SIR CHARLES. Good-bye, Sir.

*He departs. The KING and QUEEN are alone. All 's over. Nothing more to do. After a blank incomprehensible moment they sit down and turn to the letters and newspapers that have been brought for them.*

THE KING. Pleasant fellow!

THE QUEEN. Yes. What does he care?

THE KING. We 're off!

*For the train has given a jerk, which nearly upsets them.*

THE QUEEN. No.

*For it jerks no more.*

THE KING. Something went wrong with the connecting rod. Funny if they could n't start the train!

THE QUEEN. At least they might give us a good engine. The state this country 's in!

THE KING. If it were the best engine in the world I could n't drive it.

THE QUEEN. Henry . . . don't be sententious. Hildegarde sends you her love . . . she has pulled out three teeth . . . and you owe her fifteen francs.

THE KING. She shall have it.

*How quickly letters and newspapers can make life commonplace again! But yet another spasm of wrath shakes the*  
QUEEN.

THE QUEEN. Carted away like cattle!

THE KING. You should have come the round with me just now. Everyone friendly and cheerful!

THE QUEEN. Thankful to be rid of us!

THE KING. I suppose they are.

THE QUEEN. And you're glad to go.

THE KING. I suppose I am. Bermuda may be interesting. There'll be lots of things to do. . . .

*The door bursts open and in comes* COLONEL HADIK, *in great distress.*

THE KING. Why don't we start?

HADIK. You're starting, Sir. I must bid your Majesties good-bye.

THE KING. You're coming to the frontier.

HADIK. That's countermanded. God keep your Majesties!

*KING and QUEEN are on their feet in a minute.*

THE KING. My dear Colonel! I'd so much more to say to you. You've been goodness itself . . . ever since you wanted to shoot me! God bless you.

*The QUEEN catches both his hands.*

THE QUEEN. Dear Colonel Hadik . . . dear, dear Colonel Hadik! You knew we'd fail . . . you never minded. Oh, such a strength to me!

THE KING. And we won't forget our chess.

HADIK. Out of my grave, Ma'am . . . to be your servant! Back to it! But your Majesty's most humble servant . . . to the end . . . to the end!

*And even in the haste of his departure, the old man manages, tottering, to make that triple bow Court etiquette prescribes. But the effect of it on the QUEEN, when he has vanished . . . !*

THE QUEEN. No . . . he did that to mock me! He did! God forgive me . . . I'm wicked. But I think my heart's broken.

*The KING puts a comforting arm round her.*

THE KING. My dear . . . my dear! You're always so plucky. We've our lives to live.

*She pulls herself together. They are alone; and now surely all is over, for the train gives a more purposeful jerk. And the KING says . . .*

There! We're off now!

THE QUEEN. Read your papers.

*He settles himself comfortably and opens the first one to hand.*

THE KING. It has been a tiring day.

THE QUEEN. You never thought we'd win. I think I've believed we should . . . till this very minute.

THE KING. But, my dear . . . I came back to stop civil war. I've stopped it . . . and there won't be another. All the men are to be sent home. No reprisals . . . no court-martialing! I've done what I came to do. I have won.

THE QUEEN. Don't be paradoxical, Henry.

*The KING puts his hand out to one of the radiators, and says with some satisfaction . . .*

THE KING. The heat's coming on.

THE QUEEN. The whole world's laughing at us!

THE KING. It'll all be forgotten in a month or so.

THE QUEEN. That's comforting!

*He has found something of import in his newspaper.*

THE KING. Do you remember my seeing some journalist the day we left?

THE QUEEN. But I'd do it again. I'm not sorry for anything but the failure . . . not for Czernyak being killed . . . nor anything. Misfortune does n't soften us. I did tell my-

self: If we're beaten I'll at least be a better woman. But I'm not that either. I have n't changed a bit.

*He is deeper still in the newspaper.*

THE KING. Did I tell him I was n't going back to Carpathia? Well . . . I was n't. So perhaps I did.

THE QUEEN. I could have done my duty here. You're either a queen or you're not. I'm no use as anything else.

THE KING. I must write and apologise.

THE QUEEN. If we're to live like common people I shall nag at you, Henry . . . I know it . . . and be horrid to the children! Apologise? What for?

*For her ear has belatedly caught the objectionable word.*

THE KING. I misled him.

THE QUEEN. Apologise to a journalist!

*He reads, with a half enjoyable dismay. . . .*

THE KING. But spite of the smooth démenti his Majesty's eye flashed, I thought, towards the map of Carpathia behind the rococo writing-table and he fingered the hilt of his sword.

THE QUEEN. How vulgar!

THE KING. It is n't rococo . . . and I was n't wearing one.

THE QUEEN. The table's rococo.

THE KING. Louis Seize furniture is not rococo. Clever of him to guess at the map though! I never had it down before strangers.

*Suddenly they are shaken in their chairs: almost out of them.*

THE QUEEN. Are we stopping?

THE KING. No . . . this is where the line was cut. Bumpy, is n't it?

*He reads on.*

At which moment her Majesty swept into the room. A stately blonde, a woman in whom mothercraft goes hand in hand with high political intelligence. . . .

THE QUEEN. Show me!

*She takes the paper and is soon deep in it herself. The train moves on through the night towards the frontier.*















